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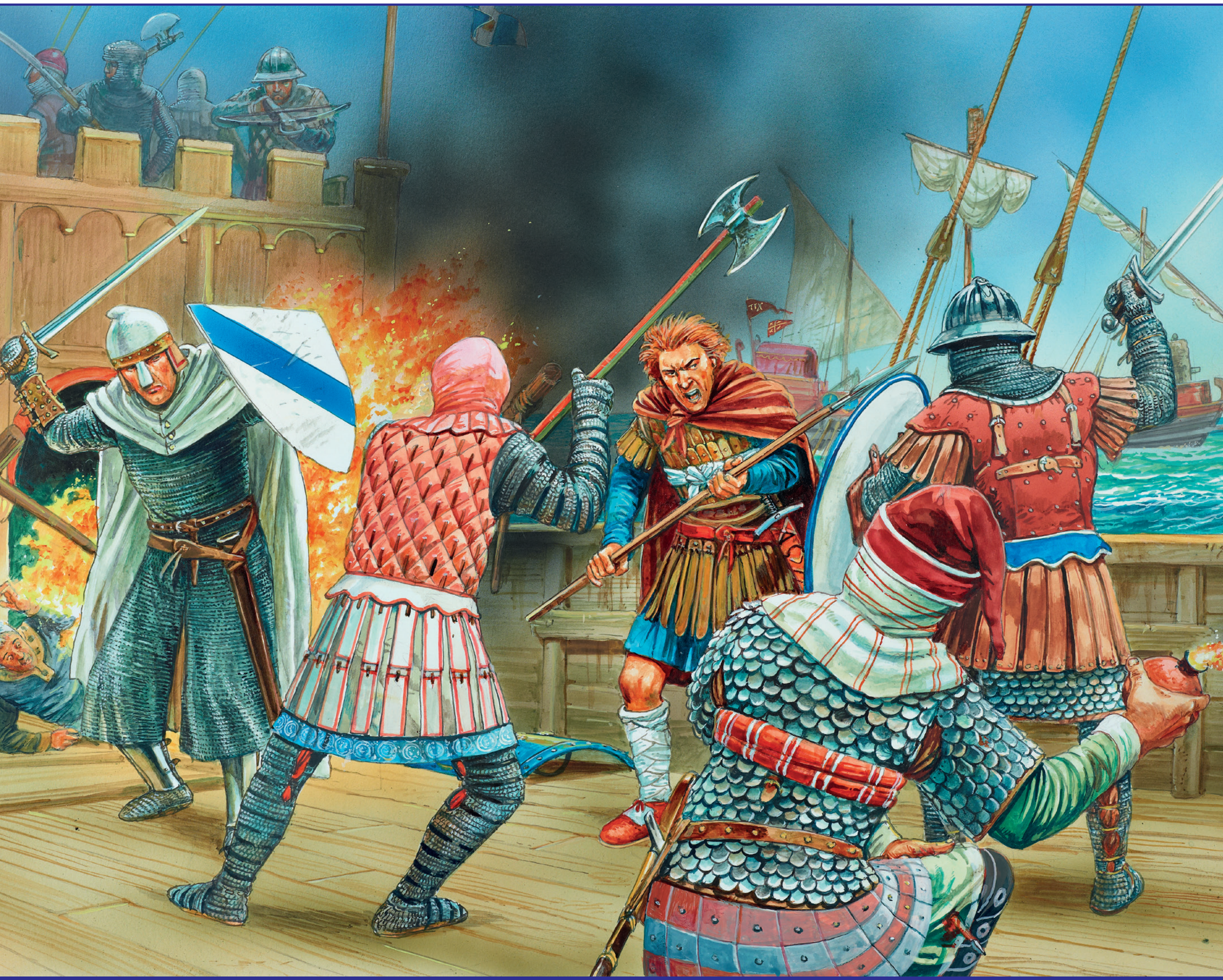
Byzantine Naval Forces 1261–1461

The Roman Empire's Last Marines



Raffaele D'Amato • Illustrated by Peter Dennis & Igor Dzis

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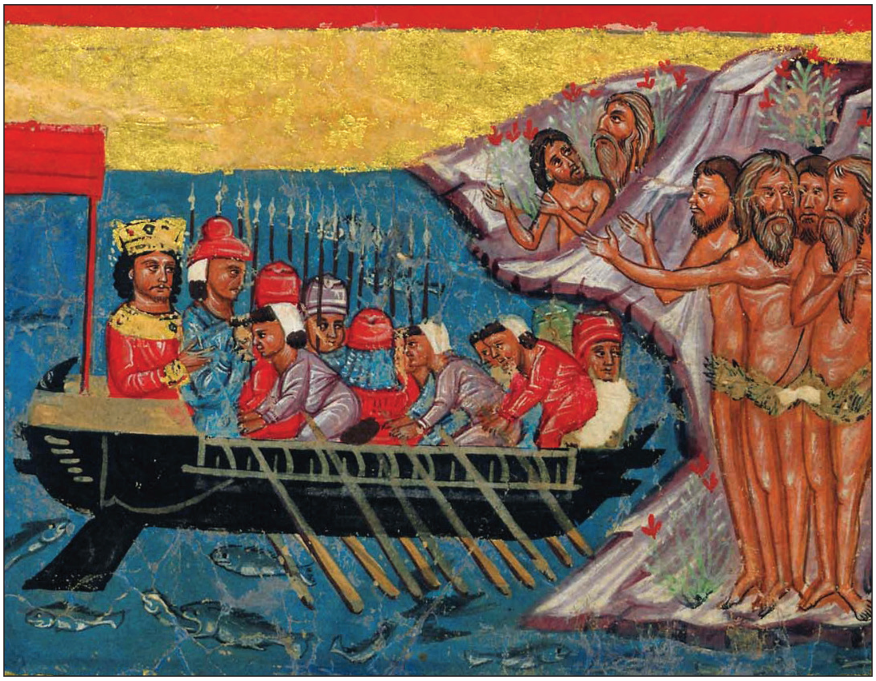

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OPPOSITE
'Joshua of Navi before the Archangel Michael', an image dating from 1260–90. The helmet appears to be of *spangenhelm* construction. Below a throat-guard, the contrasting-coloured body armour appears to be of scales, with padded fabric covering the torso, and double rows of protective strips – resembling the *pteryges* of the Classical past – at the upper arms and covering the groin and thighs. (Detail from fresco, *in situ* Church of the Taxiarchon, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

Dedication

To my beloved sons Michail and Flavius Victor, hope of all my life

Author's Note: 'Byzantine' and 'Roman'

The adjective 'Byzantine' is a modern creation. Though their language was Greek, and Westerners called them 'Greeks', the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire called themselves, with full right, *Rhomaioi*, i.e. Romans. The polity of Byzantium was an uninterrupted survival of the Late Roman Empire after the fall of the West in AD 476, and it represented the political and cultural evolution of the Roman state. In this text the term 'Byzantines' refers only to the people of the capital of that empire, Constantinople or Byzantium, since in the period discussed they were indeed called *Vyzantioi*; but the soldiers and sailors who served the Empire are given their dignity as 'Romans'.

Note on spelling: Since this text draws upon ancient, historical and modern sources in several languages, including Latin and Greek, the spelling of some names is unavoidably inconsistent.

Acknowledgements

For a great deal of new historical material in this text my thanks are due to my dear friends Prof Taxiarchis Kolias, Director of the Institute for Byzantine Research at the University of Athens, and Dr Andrea Babuin of the University of Ioannina.

For making it possible for me to photograph the frescoes from Geraki and the Mani peninsula, published here for the first time in colour, I express my gratitude to the 5th Ephorate of Greece, responsible for the regions of Lakonia and Mani. In particular I would like to thank Dr Evanghelia Pantou, director of the Ephorate, and Dr Georgios Mitris of the local archaeological museum in Aeropolis, who joined me under the hot sun in my search for the most hidden churches of the Mani region.

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Artist's Note

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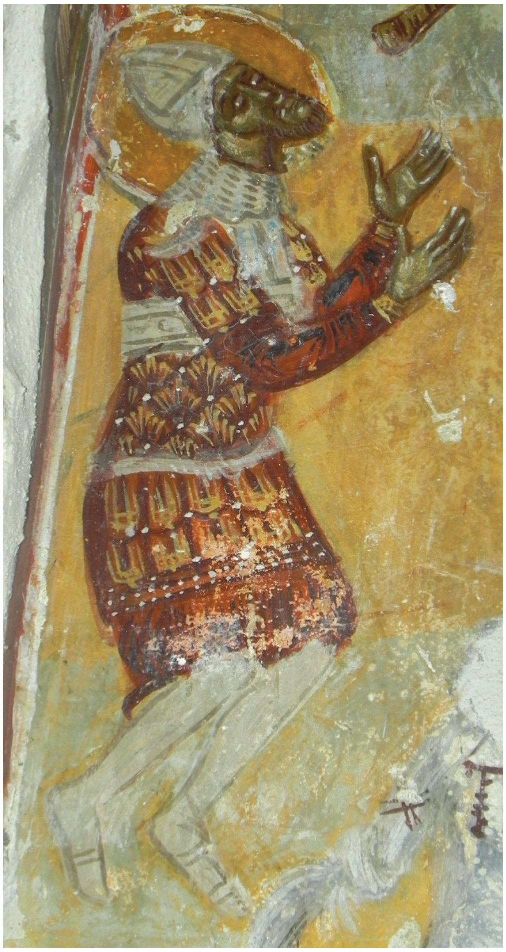
BYZANTINE NAVAL FORCES 1261–1461

INTRODUCTION

The last two centuries of the Byzantine Empire were characterized by the continuous efforts of the central authority – hampered by chaotic civil wars, and the centrifugal tendencies of the last Roman elites – to organize and maintain their military resources to face the constant menace of 'Latins' (Franks and Italians), Serbs, Bulgars, and (finally, and most dangerously) the Ottoman Turks.[1]



Despite the Roman Empire's unrivalled maritime heritage, the navy of Byzantium was in decline from the second half of the 12th century, and this contributed to the fall of Constantinople to the army of the Fourth Crusade and the Venetians in 1204. After his reconquest of the City in 1261 the Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–82) rebuilt a naval force.[2] Initially led by Alexios Philanthrôpènos, this force was manned partly with newly created regiments: the *Gasmouloi*, the marine *Tzakones*, and the *Prosalentai*. The resurrected fleet would first show its quality in the campaigns of 1262–63 against islands held by the Franks and Venetians (sources Pachymeris, 1835, I, 164 and 209, 5–12; 1984, pp.221ff, 279ff; Gregoras, 1829, I, 98, 13–17; 1973, pp.112–113); 20 years later it proved capable of withstanding an expedition by Charles d'Anjou, and it would reduce Byzantium's dependence on its Genoese collaborators in the face of Venetian naval strength. The empire restored by the Palaiologos dynasty was surrounded by hostile neighbours, and would also be torn by internal power struggles. Although its military power was only a pale shadow of its former strength, in the initial period the new marine regiments were among the elite units that proved their effectiveness in confronting external enemies. In the 14th century, while the Empire's enemies tightened nooses around the City and its few remaining overseas possessions, the marines were recorded as participants in palace coups and internecine wars.

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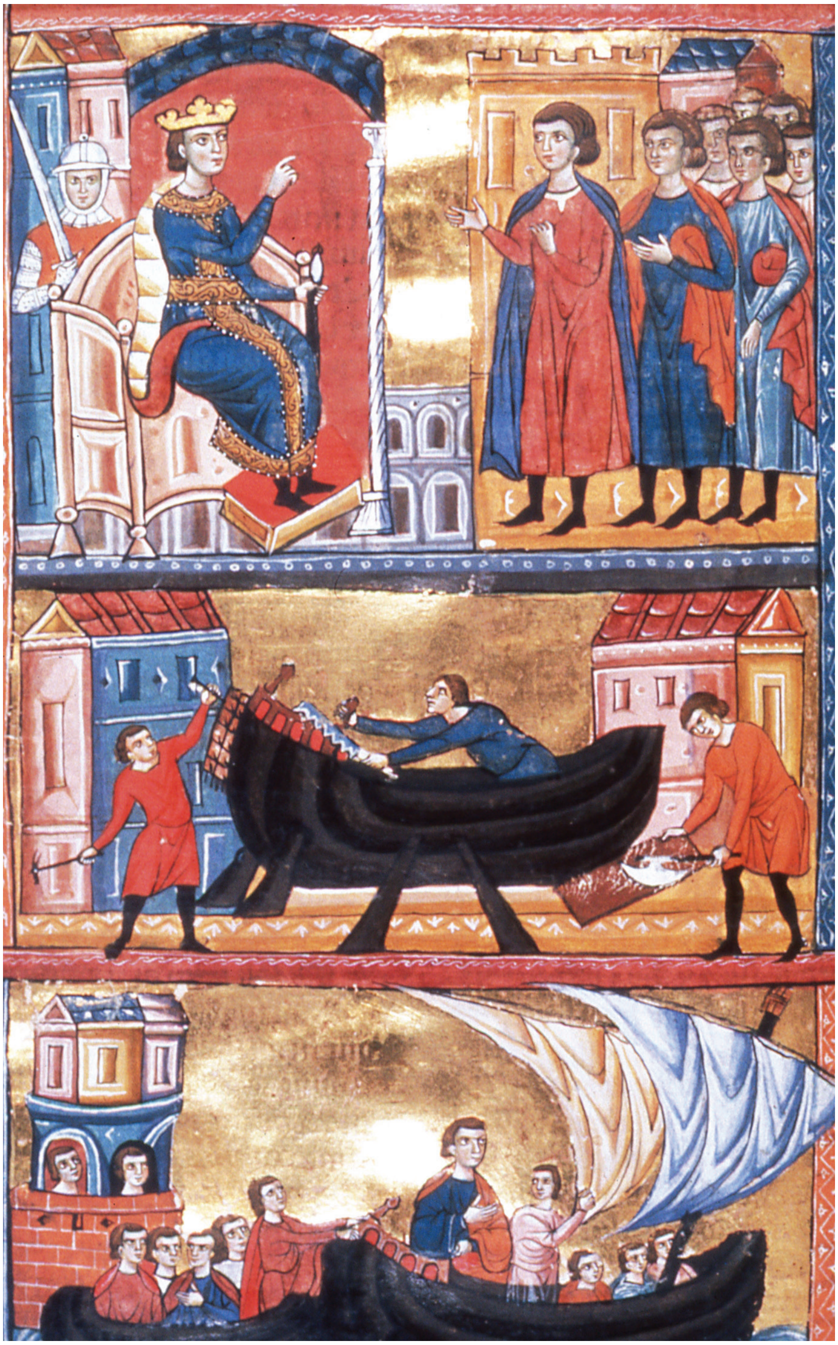
[1] 'Latin' is the usual term for the regime, initially that of the Empire of Constantinople under the Flemish monarch Baldwin I, which ruled Constantinople for 57 years after its capture by troops of the Fourth Crusade and the Venetians in 1204. The word was usually employed by the Eastern Romans to mean all Westerners belonging to the Roman Catholic Church.

[2] The use of the capitalized form 'the City' to indicate Constantinople follows the customary usage of the Romans throughout their history. The ancient Romans used to refer to Rome as *Urbs*, while the Romans of Byzantium referred to Constantinople in Greek as *Polis* – all considered their capital to be 'THE city', par excellence.

Manuscript miniatures from the *Histoire Universelle* of c.1286; it has been argued that this source shows a strong influence from Palaiologan Byzantine art. The central illumination shows craftsmen building a ship, dressed in typical Western style but with Eastern-looking tools (e.g. note the crescent-bladed axe at the right). In the lower part the sailors or marines also wear the T-shaped Italian linen or woollen tunic, called in period Latin and Greek respectively a *tunica* or *gonnella*, or a *chitonia*. (British Museum, Add Ms 15268, folio 105v; photo courtesy Dr David Nicolle)



CHRONOLOGY

1261	Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos retakes Constantinople from 'Latin Empire'.
1262	*Protostrator* Alexios Philanthrôpènos with new Genoese-Roman fleet attacks Aegean islands held by the Venetians. Genoese fleet transports army of *Sevastokrator* Constantine Palaiologos and general Kantakouzenos, with 3,000 allied Turks and Roman

	troops, from Megedon in Asia Minor to Monemvasia on the south-eastern peninsula of the Morea (the Peloponnese).
1263–1268	Naval operations against islands held by Latins and Venetians.
1275	Important Roman naval victory over Venetians at battle of Demetrias (see below, ‘Representative Actions’).
1278–1280	Imperial operations led by Genoese commander Licario/Likarios against Latin-held islands, including Euboea (Negroponte).
1281	In Imperial service, the Genoese corsair Giovanni de Lo Cavo (called *Corvo*, ‘the Raven’), harasses coalition of Charles d’Anjou and Venetians in the Mediterranean.
1332	Byzantium enters naval league with Venice and the Papacy against the Turks, supplying ten warships.
1333	Andronikos III with his war fleet visits the Turkish Sultan Orkhan in Nicomedia and signs a peace treaty.
1342	Civil war between John Kantakouzenos and Alexios Apokaukos, leader of democratic party in Constantinople. The latter arrives in Thessaloniki with fleet of 50 or 70 ships (sources Gregoras, 1829, XIII, I, 2, p.634; 1988, p.75; Kantakouzenos, 1831, vol. 2, III, 40, p.243).
1343	Second arrival in Thessaloniki of Apokaukos’s fleet, of 70 ships now supported by 32 Turkish vessels. Powerful Turkish fleet of 200–300 ships from Anatolia, commanded by Oumourbeg, Prince of Aidin, arrives in support of Kantakouzenos; Apokaukos returns to Constantinople leaving only two ships at Thessaloniki (Kantakouzenos, III, 63, p.385; Gregoras, XIII, 9, 2, pp.770–774). Anchoring at harbour of Clopas, the Turks disembark from 60 vessels and ravage the surroundings.
1421	Emperor Manuel II sends fleet of ten triremes to assist the Ottoman pretender, Mustafa, against Sultan Murad II.
1427	Last Roman naval victory, at the Echinades Islands (see below, ‘Representative Actions’).
1437	Last mention of fleet of Empire of Trebizond, Byzantine successor state on Black Sea.[3]
1460	Despot Thomas Palaiologos of the Morea escapes from the Peloponnese in two 50-oared galleys, the last remnant of the Morean fleet.

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[3] Three Byzantine successor states founded by fleeing aristocracy survived the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204. The Empire of Nicaea was a broad diagonal band of territory in western Anatolia, from the Aegean to the Black Sea coasts; the Despotate of Epiros encompassed Albania and the western half of Greece north of the Gulf of Corinth; and the Empire of Trebizond (modern Trabzon, Turkey) comprised both north-east Anatolia and southern Crimea. The Palaiologos dynasty, who replaced the original rulers of Nicaea, reconquered Constantinople in 1261; the Doukas dynasty of Epiros died out in 1318; but the ‘Trapezuntine’ state continued to flourish due to Trebizond’s wealth as the western terminus of the great Silk Road, and its rulers were challengers for the Imperial throne. It finally fell to the Ottomans in 1461.

HISTORY OF THE NAVAL FORCES

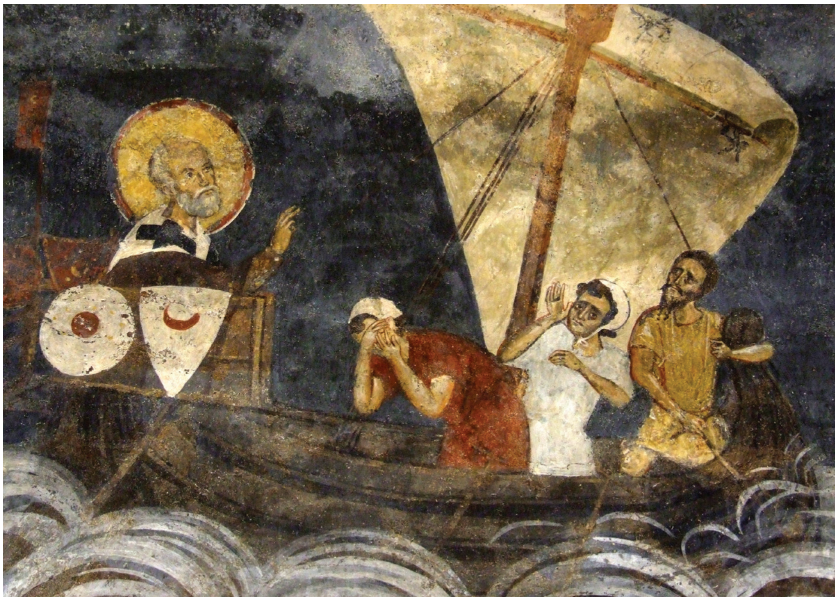
The history of Byzantium's last navy was always connected closely with that of the rival Italian maritime republics of Genoa and Venice, which vied for power throughout the Central and Eastern Mediterranean world.

Believing that he could not hope to reconquer Constantinople without a navy, Michael VIII Palaiologos negotiated the Treaty of Nympheion with Genoa in March 1261. In exchange for trade concessions Genoa agreed to provide Michael with a fleet of 50 ships, whose crews he was responsible for paying, and after the signature of the treaty 16 galleys were immediately despatched to him. Although the City itself was in fact taken by the Palaiologans without this aid, the brothers Benettin Zacaria Misero and Manuel Misero, with a flotilla of galleys and a powerful warship named the *Tartarin*, inflicted heavy losses on the Latin fleet (Sanudo, p.146).

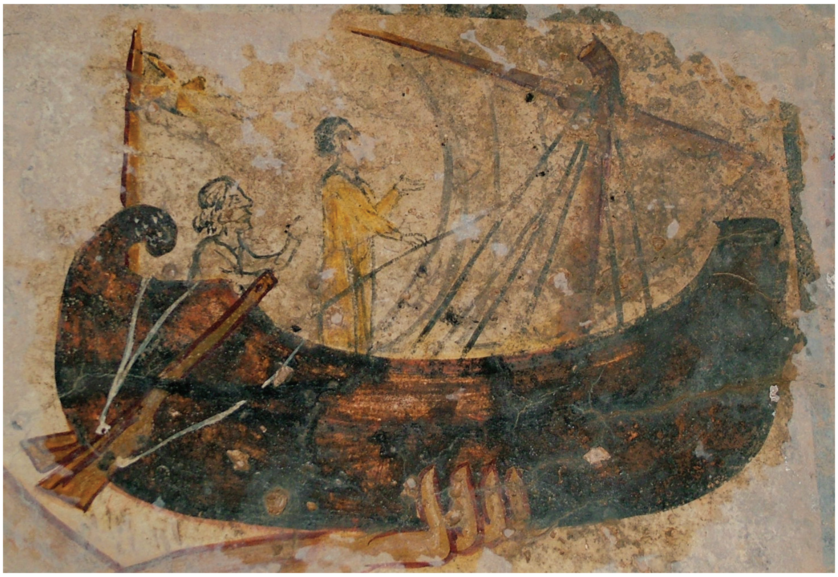
Ships

Apart from the growing evidence revealed by underwater archaeology, we have some iconography for the ships of the Eastern Mediterranean in the 13th–15th centuries. Frescoes and graffiti surviving in religious and secular buildings give us enough material to attempt reconstructions, and it is also becoming evident that naval battle scenes offer important details which can help us to understand the structure of the galleys of late Roman fleets.

A wonderful painting from the second half of the 13th century has been found on Naxos in the Church of Our Lady at the village of Arión. It represents a Roman *dhrómon* warship, painted in red, and surmounted by naval flags of a triangular shape (*flamoula*), one of them bearing a cross. Visible features include the stern with a turret for troops and a tiller for steering, the row of oars, the tall mast rising from the keel to support lateen-rigged sails, ropes and pulleys, and a lookout at the bow.



'The legend of St Nicholas', an image dated to 1259; the shields on the stern-castle of the lateen-rigged ship bear blazons of a sun and the crescent moon long associated with Byzantium. After the battle of Platea in 480 BC the City was rebuilt and mainly repopulated by Lacedaemonian (Lakonian, Spartan) colonists. When, in 339 BC, the army of Philip II of Macedon attacked the City by night, according to tradition the light from a half-moon that suddenly appeared between the clouds awoke dogs whose barking warned the defenders, and subsequently they chose this symbol for their city. (Fresco *in situ* Boyana Church, Sofia, Bulgaria; author's photo)



An early 14th-century Cretan *lembos*, with a lateen sail but also provision for oars, in a fresco of 1315 from the Church of Aghios Michail at Archanes on Crete. Vessels for trade and transport – e.g. those termed *keles*, *lembos*, *kerkuros*, etc. – showed similarities with ancient Roman types. Like those predecessors, they were used to transport men and horses in wartime. (Author's photo)

Archaeologists associate this ship with the fleet of Alexios Philanthrôpènos, engaged in operations against the Venetians during the reconquest of Naxos in 1263.

Documentary sources of the 13th and 14th centuries (e.g. Kantakouzenos, 1831, III, 70–75) often mention *trieres*, i.e. a galley with three oar-levels, and *moneres*, i.e. a ship with a single level, which are illustrated in period miniatures. During the 13th century Imperial vessels had already passed from the old style of having oars evenly spaced, usually at two levels, to grouping the oars on a single level supported by an outrigger. The *trieres* was sometimes very large, complete with turret superstructures for heavy armoured infantry. The fleet described by Kantakouzenos being prepared against the Genoese of Galata in 1348 presented a powerful spectacle: we read that the *trierai* were ready for battle, richly ornamented, and in no way inferior to the warships of the ancient Romans for splendour, armament and number of embarked troops. They were followed by *monirai*, *lemboi* and *actuaria* (*akatia*) transporting heavily armoured *kataphraktoi* (Kantakouzenos, III, 75).

The warships of the Empire of Trebizond that are mentioned in the sources were of the type called *katergon* or *bucca*, a large vessel of probably 400–600 tons, with two lateen-rigged masts and sometimes oars, capable of transporting 300–600 men. Terms used for other types of vessel were *barka* or *karavion*, i.e. the cog, a single-masted sailing ship; the *galea* or galley; and assorted small fishing and rowing boats called *griparion*, *paraskalmion* and *xylarion*. As many as 40 *xylaria* are recorded as having accompanied the major warships in the fleet of Trebizond in 1372.

Central and provincial fleets

The main fleet based at Constantinople was organized like the Imperial Guard regiments, and anchored in the harbours of the Propontis district. After the reconquest of 1261 the Imperial arsenals left the Golden Horn for reasons of security (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 365; 1984, pp.468ff) and were re-established in the Propontis, especially at Kontoskalion, where Michael VIII raised important maritime buildings. The nearby harbour of Heftaskalion was employed by the Co-Emperor John Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–54) for the arming of his new fleet (Kantakouzenos, III, 72, 74 and 76), and this maritime centre of Pissa or Kosmidion was active in shipbuilding throughout that century.

The provincial fleets were still organized like the old *themata.* The provincial governors enjoyed a high degree of independence from the central authorities, and built their ships at local arsenals such as those of Tenedos, Lemnos and Thessaloniki. The Danube was often visited by Roman warships sent by Constantinople, and still had maritime installations of sufficient importance to be defended by garrisons. As well as guaranteeing the maintenance of war fleets they built the small vessels of the river navies, called *arklia* and *naukelia.*

The Despotate of the Morea (the Peloponnese) also had a modest fleet, established by Manuel Kantakouzenos after his appointment as despot in the mid-14th century. Genoese and Venetian flotillas established in Trebizond and elsewhere on the Black Sea coasts occasionally acted on behalf of the Empire.

Fleet of the Trebizond Empire

Roman naval power in the Black Sea faced fewer challenges, and the independent Empire of Trebizond made great efforts to stop the Anatolian Turks from reaching the coast. Once the Turks managed to do so, however, their captains found rich pickings on the trade route linking Trebizond with Crimea.

These sea lanes were vital to the Trapezuntine Empire, which maintained a permanent navy. The arsenals of Trebizond, Kérasous, Pérateia, Sougdaia, and Matrarcha built both merchant and military vessels, but the navy was of only modest size. It usually comprised only two or three major warships, plus smaller vessels which were requisitioned from civilian owners as required. For example, in 1355 the fleet counted only one warship and 11 smaller vessels, and in 1379 just two of each class. However, there is an interesting mention by Ludovico da Bologna of a fleet of 30 ships, and in 1402 Tamerlane demanded that the Emperor Manuel III Komnenos provide the service of 20 galleys against the Ottomans.

Manning the fleet

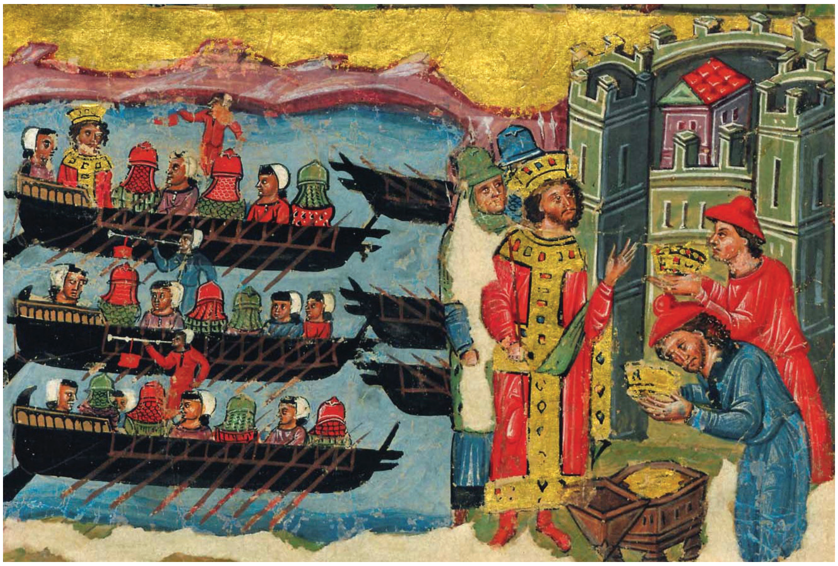
In the 1260s the Emperor Michael VIII was unwilling to rely exclusively upon the maritime power of his allies the Genoese, arch-rivals of the Venetians, and so he set out to rebuild a Roman national navy. Given the anti-Western feelings that understandably motivated the Byzantine people after the Latin occupation, this last Roman fleet had to be commanded by Romans and manned by Roman sailors and marines. The Imperial Fleet, a new *Vasilikos Stolos*, was described by Gregoras and Pachymeris; it was placed under the command of the *Protostrator* Alexios Philanthrôpènos (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 209; 1884, p.277), with stations in the provinces commanded by regional dukes.

The emperor created, among others, three military units to serve with the fleet: the *Gasmouloi* and the marine *Tzakones*, and the oarsmen of the *Prosalentai* (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 188, 2–8 and 309, 2–5; 1984, pp.252–253, 400–402). The *Gasmouloi* and the *Tzakones* were employed as embarked troops and light infantry; although other lightly armoured *Tzakones* were posted to defend the City walls (Pachymeris, I, 187, 1–3 and 188, 2–4; 1984, p.252 and n.3), Gregoras specifically calls them 'a maritime armed force' (1829, I, 98; 1973, pp.112–113).

Operations, 1260s–1290s

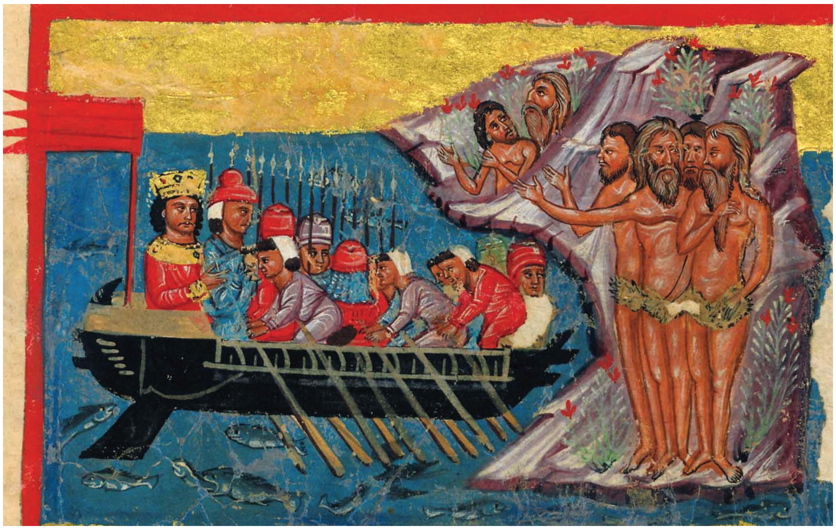
The effectiveness of the new units was soon demonstrated: in 1263, when Philanthrôpènos successfully led a Genoese-Roman fleet against a number of islands held or dominated by the Venetians (Paros, Naxos, Kos, and the Euboean baronies of Karystos and Oreos), Michael's new naval troops were the kernel of the fleet. 'The *Gasmouloi* were bold in battle... while those called Proselontes were assigned to rowing only. In addition, there were the Lakonians [*Tzakones*] whom the ruler had transplanted from the Peloponnese' (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 309; 1984, IV, 26, p.401). In the same year, operations were also carried out in Crete to help the local population in their rebellion against the Venetians (Pachymeris, I, 205–209). In 1268 a new expedition sailed to the Morea to seize Peloponnesian coastal territory, and the *Tzakones* and *Gasmouloi* were once again the key fighting element on board.

In 1273, during the great expedition against the Epirot ruler, the Despot John I Doukas of Thessaly, a fleet of about 73 ships manned at least in part by *Tzakones* and *Gasmouloi*, and once again under the command of Philanthrôpènos, attacked the Latin lords of Greece who supported John I (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 324; 1984, pp.419ff; Gregoras, 1829, I, 117; 1983, pp.122ff). The sources claim a total strength of 40,000 men for this expedition; nevertheless, its siege of Neopatras ended in decisive defeat, and the troops fell back to the coast. The Latin lords sent a mainly Venetian fleet from Crete and from Euboea (then called the Triarchy of Negroponte) to attack the Imperial fleet anchored at Demetrias on the Gulf of Volos. At the beginning of the battle the Romans seemed destined for defeat, but the arrival of reinforcements led by the emperor's younger brother, the Despot John Palaiologos, turned the tide; the Latin fleet was completely routed, and its leaders captured (see also pages 41–42).



'Alexander went to Sicily', folio 43r from *The Romance of Alexander*, Codex Gr 5, an illuminated manuscript from Trebizond dated to the second half of the 14th century. The figures shown in the galleys are differentiated between sailors, wearing white coif-like bonnets (including the officers and the trumpeters); and soldiers, wearing typical Byzantine helmets with aventails or mail hoods lacquered in red or green. (Original in Biblioteca dell'Istituto Ellenico di San Giorgio dei Greci, Venice; facsimile edition, author's collection)

‘Alexander arrives at the island of the Gymnosophistai’, folio 113v from *The Romance of Alexander*. Again, a clear distinction is made between the oarsmen and the embarked soldiers, whose polearms can be seen in this illustration. Note, immediately to the right of the king, a figure wearing a blue kaftan-style garment, and a red hat over his white coif. (Original in Biblioteca dell’Istituto Ellenico di San Giorgio dei Greci, Venice; facsimile edition, author’s collection)



This victory at Demetrias went a long way toward mitigating the disaster of Neopatras, and marked the beginning of a sustained Roman offensive across the Aegean. By 1278 the emperor’s Genoese commander Licario (or Likarios) had subdued all of Euboea except for its capital, Chalkis, and by 1280, as grand admiral (*Megas Dukas*) of the Imperial fleet, he had retaken most of the Aegean islands for the Empire. Licario’s forces included Sicilian and German mercenaries, and also Catalans; this was the Catalans’ first recorded appearance in Greece, and it is noteworthy that they were employed as embarked troops.

Disbandments, and aftermath

By 1283 the reconstituted navy comprised 80 ships, but soon afterwards, following a truce with Venice signed in 1285, the Emperor Michael’s son Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) disbanded it and dismissed the *Gasmouloi* and *Tzakones* in an attempt to reduce costs. He chose instead to rely entirely on Genoese vessels, of which 50–60 had already been hired by 1291. The *Prosalentai* were not much affected by this decision, because the lands granted to them by Michael VIII in exchange for their military service were already in their hands; they carried on their duties in Constantinople until at least 1296, and probably into the early 14th century.

The *Tzakones* received some grants of land and cash at the time of their discharge, and they did survive in the provinces. They were settled in many areas of the Empire, including Pontus and Thrace, and still carried out garrison duties in fortresses. A letter of the Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus refers to impoverished ‘Dorians and Peloponnesians’ settled at Herakleia in Thrace. Bartusis suggests that, with time, the *Tzakones* remaining in Constantinople probably lost their separate ethnicity (see below, ‘The Regiments’), and seem to have become amalgamated into the *Gasmouloi.*

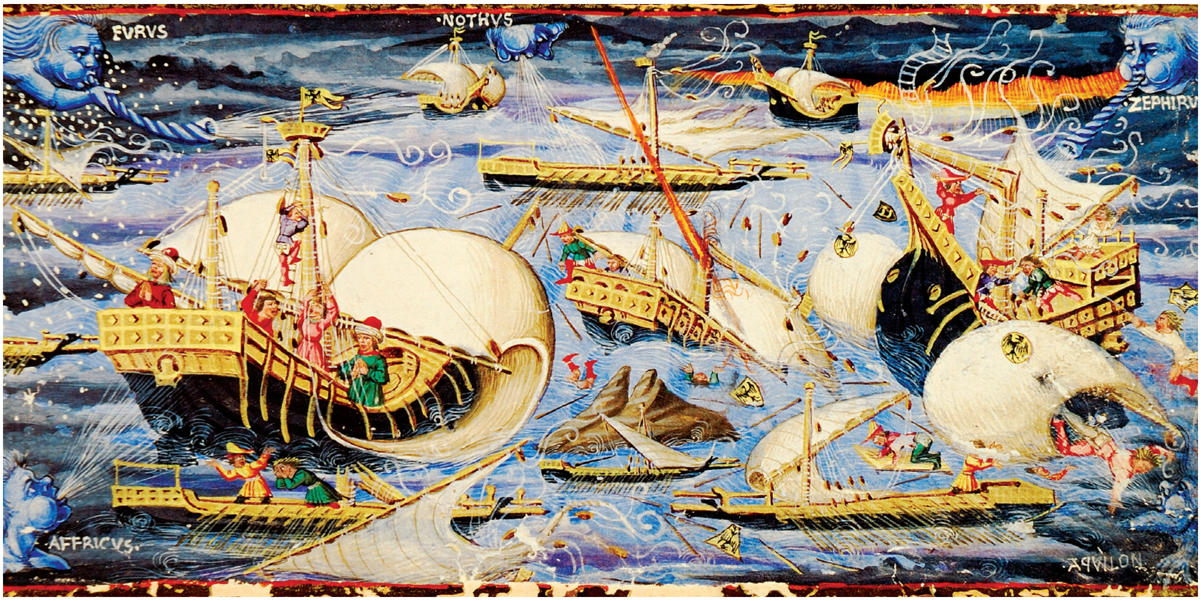
The latter were the most affected by Andronikos’s measures. Gregoras explicitly mentions their impoverishment and the decimation of their redundant ranks. The ultimate consequence was that many of them passed into the service of Frankish Crusader states, and Turkish *beyliks* on the Aegean coast. By 1300 some of them are already to be found in Venetian service in Crete (Carbone, 8 n.4). Again, 'for these reasons the warlike soldiers of the Fleet, neglected by all and deprived of their salary, partially turned to labouring work in order to survive... and partially deserted to the enemies, so that together with them they ravaged Roman territory in the manner of pirates' (Pachymeris, 1835, II, 71; 1999, p.82). Others, on the other hand, 'became hirelings of those renowned Romans distinguished by wealth, others [still] gave up their arms and turned to farming' (Gregoras, 1829, I, 175; 1973, p.153). We read in 1340 of the *Gasmouloi* of Kallipolis, who served the Ottoman sultans after their dismissal by John VI Kantakouzenos because they represented a threat to his security (Doukas, *Hist.*, 1834, XXIV, 140; 1975, pp.136–137).

Some of them, however, continued to serve in the fleet, playing an active role both in military actions and in Constantinople's disorders. Marco Minoto, a Venetian *bailli* of Byzantium, writes in March 1320 that 'in Constantinople Venetians, both Christians and Jews, are being despoiled by *Gasmouloi*, Greeks and officials of the Emperor' (Bowman, 1985, 247–248, doc. 41).

Consequences

Andronikos II would soon have reason to review his maritime policy. In 1305, following the murder at the orders of the Co-Emperor Michael IX of Roger de Flor, leader of the mercenary Catalan 'Grand Company', a Catalan fleet appeared before Constantinople. The emperor tried to reorganize his navy, restoring the few remaining ships (Gregoras, 1829, I, 227–228; 1973, p.181), but particularly appealing to the Genoese, who regarded the Catalans as a menace to their own commercial interests. The Genoese fleet, with no more than 12 small Byzantine vessels in company, tried to control the Hellespont to stop the Catalan ships carrying Turkish troops into Thrace. These operations soon partly degenerated into piracy, however, and some of the Genoese attacked the important Roman base of Tenedos.

'The tempest of the Greek fleet', folio 63 from the *Vergilio Riccardiano* manuscript of about 1450. Both the galleys and the larger vessels with turreted sterns seem to have lateen-rigged sails. The oarsmen of the galleys are clearly protected by some kind of bulwark or outrigger, painted here in a different colour from the hull. (Courtesy Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence; Ricc. 492; Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali)

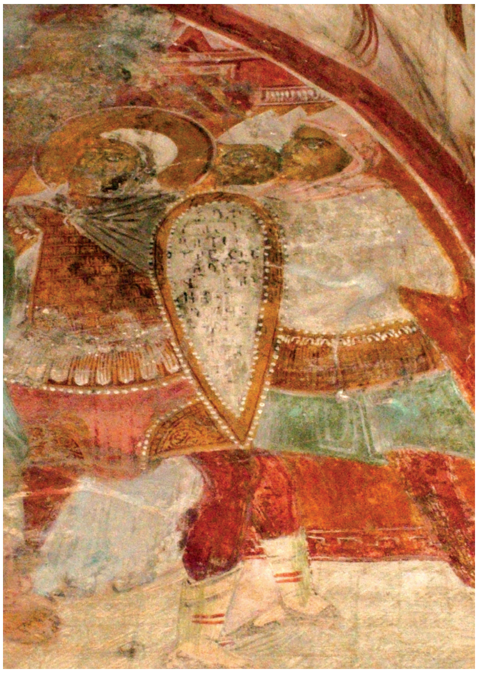


Gregoras writes that, in about 1320, Andronikos planned to fund the revival of a permanent fleet by raising new taxes to build 20 galleys, but civil wars, the devastation of Thrace and Macedonia by the Turks, and the menace of the Serbians and Bulgarians prevented this. The emperor's plans were implemented by his grandson Andronikos III (r. 1328–41), who also re-employed *Gasmouloi* and probably *Prosalentai* as well. The *Gasmouloi* provided a nucleus for the crews of a reconstituted fleet of 70 vessels to face the Turkish threat. Subsequently they also seem have played an active role in the civil wars of the 1340s (Gregoras, 1829, XIV, 10, II, 736–740; 1988, pp.139–141) between the Empress Anna and John VI Kantakouzenos, during which they were loyal to the latter's opponent Alexios Apokaukos:

> After this speech, when it was clear that Apokaukos would be given the supremacy of Byzantium and of the islands with all their taxes, an Imperial letter was written by which he was appointed commander of the Fleet against the Persians [i.e. the Turks] and was ordered to draw from the public treasury 100,000 gold coins, so that from this and from his own means, as he had promised, he would fit out triremes and provide the maintenance of their mercenary soldiers. (Kantakouzenos, 1831, Vol. I, Book II, 540; 1986, p.149)

Their presence in the fleet in this period is also attested in Gallipoli (Doukas, 1834, XXIV, 140; 1975, pp.136–137), in Enos (Marco Minoto, AD 1320, *Mon. Stor.* V, p.167), in the islands, in the Peloponnese and at Thessaloniki (Kantakouzenos, 1831, II, 575). Beside these elite troops the Imperial fleets were manned during the turbulent 14th century by men from southern Greece, Greek-speaking people from areas under Latin control, Russian, Spanish, Catalan and Italian naval mercenaries. Our sources confirm that the *Prosalentai* still existed as an institution until the second half of the century, though sometimes the word means simply 'rowers' or 'rowing' (Pachymeris, 1835, II, 237–238, 240; 1999, pp.262ff). However, despite all these efforts, the Empire was never again able to achieve its former greatness at sea.

There is no evidence that later emperors attempted to recruit *Prosalentai*, *Gasmouloi* and *Tzakones* to replace or reinforce the existing contingents. Nevertheless, men bearing these titles are still encountered inside the Empire as late as 1361, for the *Prosalentai*; 1422, in the case of the *Gasmouloi*; and 1429, for the *Tzakones* (Sphrantzès IV, 17, col. 975–976). According to the latter, and to Constantine Porphyrogenitos (*De Cerimoniis*, I, 695–696), the *Tzakones* had had a great reputation as defenders of fortresses since the 8th century AD. As early as AD 746, Monemvasia was considered an Imperial maritime centre of fundamental importance, garrisoned by *Tzakones* who spoke the Doric dialect, and this was still the case nearly 700 years later in 1429, when the Empire had been reduced to enclaves around Constantinople and Thessaloniki, in the Peloponnese and the northern Aegean. In that year the inhabitants of Monemvasia considered themselves loyal allies of the Empire (*Simmachoi Monemvasiotai*), but as free as their Spartan forefathers had been. They enjoyed a great reputation as infantry and cavalry but also, according to Sphrantzès, as seafarers.



The centurion and soldiers at the Crucifixion, in an image from 1289–90. Note the centurion's white bonnet, and almond-shaped 'kite' shield. Another 13th-century fresco of the same subject in the Cemetery Church of Pentakia at Kounos, Kati Mani, shows the centurion (traditionally named as Longinus) in very similar headgear, though with a round shield. (Detail from fresco, *in situ* Church of Panaghia Chrisafitissa, Chrisafa, Lakonia; author's photo)

The *Gasmouloi*

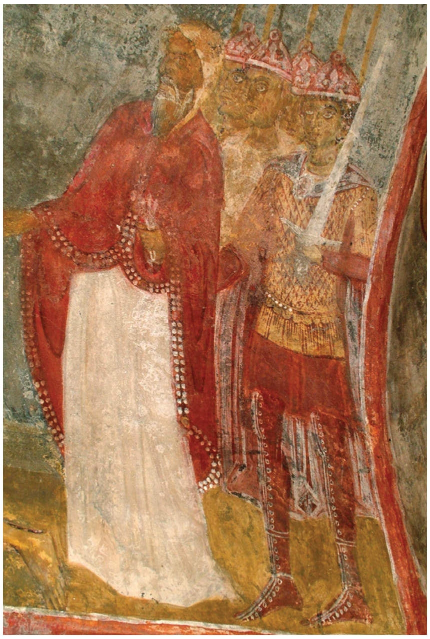
According to Pachymeris, in the 1260s Michael VIII's fleet 'was indeed great, being composed of many ships full of warlike young men, hungry for booty' (1835, I, 309; 1984, p.400).

The first contingent of soldiers for his new fleet was obtained by Michael VIII from the ferocious *Gasmouloi,* who originated from the region surrounding Byzantium and lived in and around the City, especially in the Propontis – a district where the cohabitation of Latins and Greeks had begun long before the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204, and continued long afterwards. The emperor is also said to have resettled some of them from the Peloponnese in the 1260s. It is significant that these people were born of or descended from Italian fathers and Byzantine mothers (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 309; 1984, p.400; Gregoras, 1829, I, 98, 8–10; 1973, p.113). According to Kambourouglou, the term *Vasmoulos/ Gasmoulos* (Du Cange, *Gloss.*, col. 181–182, 238) carried the meaning of 'bastard'. Despite the implication in the sources that they were not true-born *Rhomaioi,* their loyalty was clearly to the Byzantine Roman state, for which they formed the military contingent called *Gasmoulikon.* Pachymeris set out the commonly held opinion of them as having the best qualities of both Romans and Latins (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 188, 8–13 and 309, 14–15; 1984, pp.253, 400; Gregoras, 1829, IV, 5, I, p.98; 1973, p.113): 'the contingent of the *Gasmouloi,* who being of mixed race could speak the Latin language – for they were born of both Romans and Latins... had forethought in war and prudence from the Romans, [and] audacity and stubbornness from the Latins'. This being their description by a Roman source, it is intriguing to compare it with that left in about 1330 by the Latin author of the *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum* ('Advice for an Overseas Passage', 7, 7, 100–101):

> They are called Gasmouli, who were begotten on their father's side by a Greek and on their mother's side by a Latin, or on their father's side by a Latin and on their mother's side by a Greek. In faith they are fickle, in promise deceitful, in word mendacious, adroit in evil, ignorant of good, impudent to their betters, prone to discord, accustomed to plundering, inclined to savagery, adverse to piety, hungry for carnage and death, restless in everything, given to drink, incontinent without restraint, slaves to greed, gluttony and intemperance, loving no one beside themselves... They present themselves as Greeks to Greeks and Latins to Latins, being all things to all men, not to make a profit… but to destroy.

It should be borne in mind that this Western author, perhaps a certain Guilherme Adam, was urging King Philip VI of France (r. 1328–50), to undertake a crusade. However, while the *Gasmouloi* usually thought of themselves as Roman and fought on the Roman side, it is true that this was not always the case. At the beginning of the 14th century the *Gasmouloi* in Thessaloniki, who represented one-third of that city's population, did not hesitate to pass themselves off as Latins if it suited their interests.

We have no information about the number of the *Gasmouloi* in Byzantium, but it must have been considerable, considering that mixed marriages between resident Latins from Italy and Byzantines were already common as early as the 11th century. Michael VIII's tolerance of the Latin population left in Constantinople after 1261 was probably motivated by a desire to nurture the loyalty of these valuable troops. Assigned to the fleet as mercenary soldiers, they seem to have made up the marines of the fleet stationed in Constantinople (along with *Tzakones*), and also served as oarsmen (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 164, 15–16 and 188, 8–11; 1984, pp.222–223, 252; Gregoras, 1829, I, 98, 6–8; 1973, p.113). This first nucleus of the reconstituted marines also crewed the *Vasilikê Holkas* (the flotilla of the Imperial house) stationed at the Blachernai Palace (Gregoras, 1829, I, 135; 1973, pp.132–133; Pachymeris, 1835, I, 423; 1984, pp.538–539).



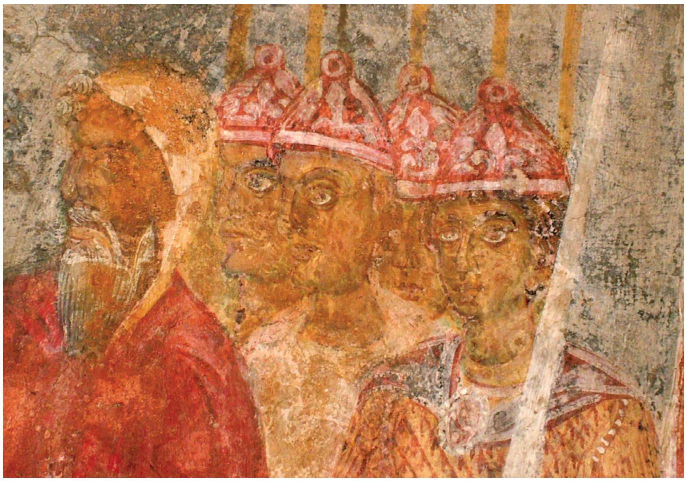
'The One who comes in the Name of the Lord' (the *Elkomenos*), 1289–90. Note the red *anaxyrida* trousers, and the shape of the sword. (Detail from fresco, *in situ* Church of Panaghia Chrisafitissa, Chrisafa, Lakonia; author's photo)

On one occasion at least the emperor used them to punish an insult to his authority. In 1275 or spring 1276, two Genoese galleys cruising in the Black Sea seized a Genoese ship owned by the Zaccaria brothers, who had an Imperial monopoly for the alum trade. Perhaps more seriously, they also sailed past the Blachernai Palace without making the proper salute required by the Treaty of Nympheion. The emperor sent a force of *Gasmouloi* after them under the command of Alexios Alyattes, the Imperial *Vestiarios.* When they overtook the Genoese the emperor ordered that the latter should be blinded, a task that his fearsome marines promptly carried out (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 423–425; 1984, pp.534ff; Gregoras, 1829, I, 133ff; 1973, pp.131ff).

As already mentioned, the *Gasmouloi* formed the marines of the fleet commanded by Apokaukos in the 1340s. They took an active part in the internecine fighting against John VI Kantakouzenos, and were the protagonists of the bloody events that troubled the capital shortly before he took power. Obviously Kantakouzenos could not rely upon them, and he dismissed them – whereupon these expert naval troops provided a nucleus for crews of the first great Ottoman fleets. However, according to Ahrweiler, *Gasmouloi* of Constantinople continued to be employed in the Byzantine fleet until the end of the Empire.

The marine *Tzakones*

The need for troops soon obliged Michael VIII to look elsewhere. Following a defeat at Pelagonia (1259), the Frankish ruler of the Duchy of Achaia in the south-eastern Peloponnese was forced to give up territory and fortresses in ancient Lakonia, including Mistra (Mystras) near the old Spartan capital, Nauplion, Epidauros, and Monemvasia on the south-eastern coast. It was in this area that Michael sought manpower in 1261–62, investing large sums in transporting families of *Tzakones* to Byzantium. The term *Tzakones* had both a geographical derivation (from Lakonia) and, by an association of ideas, a functional one, referring to the type of troops recruited from that region, who were famous for their skills in garrisoning castles. He assigned them particular quarters around the City, and enlisted some of them into his new fleet (Gregoras, 1829, I, 98; 1973, p.113). Pachymeris writes that Michael 'had great need to settle in the City lightly armed soldiers, and so he called [on] many Lakones who arrived from the Morea, and he settled them as natives, distributing places near the City. Bestowing yearly pay, he also supplied them with many other rights, and used them for many [duties] inside and outside [the City], for they displayed worthy behaviour in the wars' (1835, I, 188, 2–8; also 164, 10–14 and 309, 16–19; 1984, pp.222, 252, 400–401).

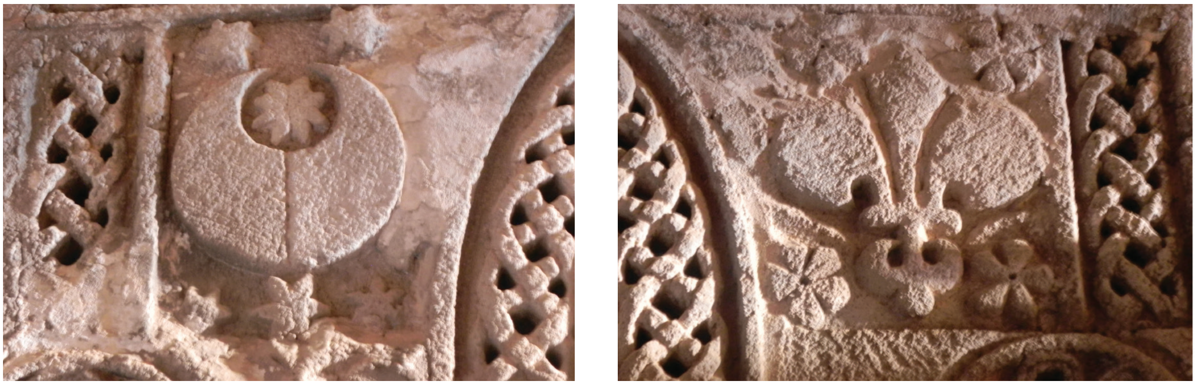


Detail of the helmets in the *Elkomenos* fresco. They appear to be the simplest type of iron bowl or possibly *spangenhelm*, but with a ringed knob at the apex, and under magnification a *fleur-de-lys* motif can be seen on the front. (Detail from fresco, *in situ* Church of Panaghia Chrisafitissa, Chrisafa, Lakonia; author's photo)

These Peloponnesians became prominent in the garrison of the City, and soon supplied a body of Imperial Guards (Pseudo-Kodinos, 180), assigned to defend the sea walls (Pachymeris, 1835, II, 33; III, 9, pp.187, 1–3 and 188, 1–4; 1984, pp.250–252). Pachymeris states that there was no need for soldiers serving on the walls to be heavily armoured, since for sorties against possible besiegers the defenders could rely upon the heavy armoured cavalry from the Imperial headquarters. Their naval qualities were also known from as early as the time of St Nikon the Metanoite in the 11th century: 'the sons of the Lakones… consider as their own the biremes and the triremes of the State, and made [manned] the Imperial fleet which sailed the seas' (178). It was therefore logical that units from this new contingent supplemented the *Gasmouloi* in providing the bulk of the marine troops for the reconstituted Imperial fleet.

Their presence and origin is specifically noted during two naval campaigns, in 1262 and 1273: 'many others were from the Lakones, [a name] that the people have corrupted to "*Tzakones*", whom the ruler transplanted with their wives and children to Constantinople from the Morea and other western regions, and who were numerous and warlike' (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 309; 1984, pp.400–401); and 'Joining [the *Gasmouloi*] were the Lakones, that in the common spoken language are called *Tzakones*, constituting a maritime armed force, who came to the Emperor from the Peloponnese' (Gregoras, 1829, I, 98, 4–5; 1973, p.113). Unlike the *Gasmouloi* they were considered by the Romans to be fellow Greeks (Hellenes), descended from the ancient Lakonians and still speaking a Doric dialect.

Michael issued his generals with blank letters of appointment to be given to *Tzakones*, who, in exchange for military service, often received the title of *Sebastos*. The profession was hereditary, rewarded not only with a salary but also with *topoi* or land holdings near Byzantium (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 188, 5; 1984, p.252). Bartusis has suggested that although such grants were probably too small for substantial farming they nevertheless provided a home, in order to ensure the continued service of the heirs of the original recruits: 'such an Imperial policy would ensure a constant supply of resident mercenaries, and further, since conditional possession of however modest a property would deter many mercenaries from leaving their jobs to seek employment elsewhere, it would have put the



Carved symbols of the *Tzakones*, second half of 13th century: at left, a crescent moon enclosing an eight-rayed sun; at right, a *fleur-de-lys*. (Stone *proskynetarion*, *in situ* Church of Aghios Georgios tou Kastrou, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

Emperor in an advantageous position when negotiating pay rises' (Bartusis, p.47).

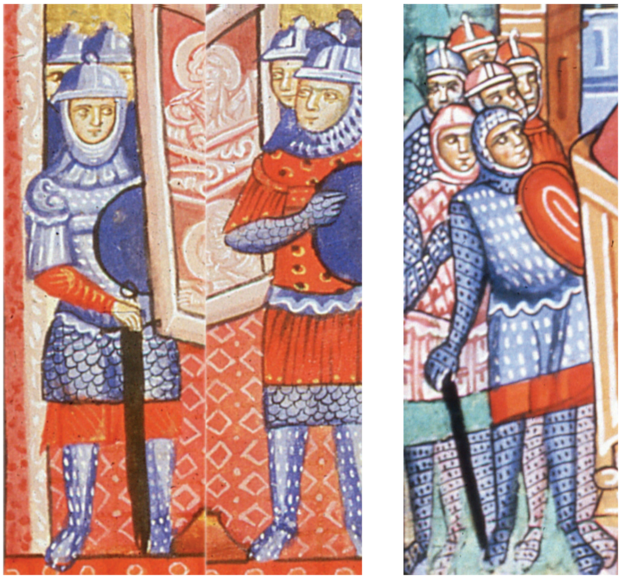
The presence or activity of Lakonians far from the capital, in Asia Minor and in Pontus, is indicated by place names containing the root of the word *Tzakones*, e.g. Tsakonos (Ano Matsouka in Pontus), Tsakonochori (in Anatolian Thrace), and Tsachnochori (in Roumelia). This diaspora around the Empire's territories was mainly due to their activity as marines all around 'Romania', but probably also to the changes in the stationing of the fleet determined by the policy of Andronikos II.

The *Prosalentai*

The third group enlisted by Michael VIII for his new fleet was composed of native Romans, free peasant smallholders called *Prosalentai.* In contrast to the first two categories they were, in principle, oarsmen or *remiges*, while the other two regiments were mainly employed as fighting troops. According to Pachymeris, the emperor 'fitted out and built a fleet and assigned more than a thousand rowers from the lands'. The words *Proselontes* or *Prosalentai* were used – according to Pachymeris – as the official designation for the Imperial rowers of Michael VIII (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 164, 15ff, 209, 9–10 and 425, 14; 1984, pp.222, 276, 542). The expression used means that they did not come from Byzantium itself but from other areas of the Empire. Bartusis suggests that these rowers were recruited amongst the peasants of lands now abandoned by their Frankish masters. According to Pachymeris, 'giving service to them [the *Tzakones* and *Gasmouloi*] as rowers were the *Proselontes,* to most of whom, especially to those who were the best, the ruler assigned lands everywhere close to the coast' (Pachymeris, 1835, IV, 26, 309; 1984, p.400). The offer of lands in exchange for service in the fleet must have been an attractive proposition, and they received modest holdings in specifically designated settlements close to the harbours where their galleys were stationed, thus being easy to muster in time of need.

The recruitment of these oarsmen represented a further attempt by the emperor to increase the population of the reconquered capital, because many of the land grants assigned to them were inside and around Byzantium. However, the sources also mention lands on the islands – e.g. on Lemnos, where a group of *Prosalentai* held land for at least 80 years between 1284 and 1361. The institution itself was remarkably stable and probably hereditary; around 1330, on the Kassandreia peninsula of the Halkidiki, the *Prosalentai* were free landowners with properties of at least several acres. Oarsmen also had lands on the Longos peninsula, near Kassandreia, and in the area east of the mouth of the Strymon river. Some of the land grants were large enough to encompass an entire village or even a small town. Their profession was never very remunerative, however, and some sources also indicate that they might be reduced to the class of dependent peasants. Since they held their lands on condition of continued service as rowers for the fleet, no doubt regulations developed regarding the frequency with which service could be demanded, and the status of a holding that could not provide a man fit to row. Probably some kind of system was established whereby settlements were jointly responsible for providing a fixed number of oarsmen.

The *Prosalentai* featured in one incident with the Genoese residents of Galata, the foreign merchants' northern quarter facing Constantinople proper from across the Golden Horn. After an argument during a drinking session an oarsman of this class struck a Genoese who had taunted him by saying that Constantinople would soon be Latin again. The Genoese slew the man with his sword, and his killing enraged the emperor so much that Michael called out troops from outside and inside the City, determined to expel all the Genoese from Galata. The emperor's rage only subsided after the Genoese authorities agreed to pay a hefty indemnity (Pachymeris, 1835, I, 425; 1984, p.542).



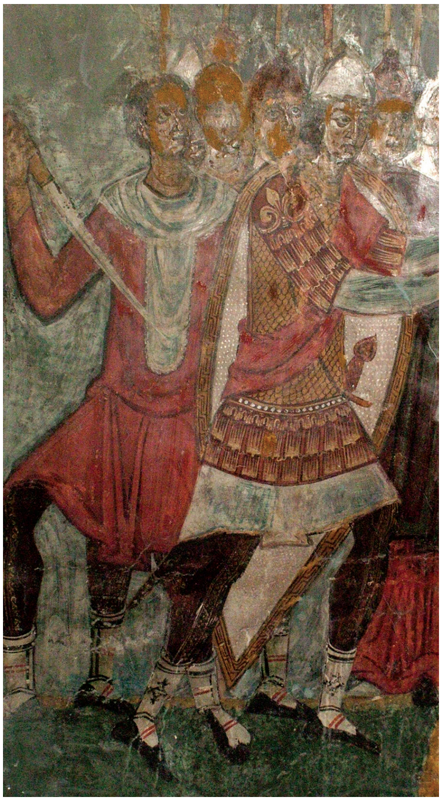
'Soldiers of Nimrod': details of folios 16r and 71r from the *Histoire Universelle*, c.1286. Visible here are both *chapel-de-fer* 'war-hats' and simple *spangenhelm* helmets; a red-lacquered coat-of-plates; scale and mail armour worn both uncovered and under 'soft armour'; long-sleeved ringmail hauberks with mittens; and ringmail chausses. See reconstructions, Plate B. (British Library, Add Ms 15268; photos courtesy Dr David Nicolle)

FLEET ORGANIZATION & STRENGTH

Command

The commander-in-chief of the Imperial Fleet was the *Megas Dukas* or Great Admiral. Alexios Philanthrôpènos, and Likarios (Licario), were the main architects of the naval victories of Michael VIII's reign. After the death of Likarios we read that the rank of *Admiraglio* was held by Giovanni de Lo Cavo, a Genoese former pirate (Sanudo, p.132), although in other sources he is mentioned only as *Comes* (Count) *undecim lignorum armatorum*, i.e. a subordinate commander of 11 warships in the fleet. In the 14th century the most famous *Megas Dukas* was Alexios Apokaukos, who was involved in the civil war between the Palaiologans and Kantakouzenos. The last remembered *Megas Dukas* was probably Demetrios Laskaris Leontares (Leontarios), the victor at the Echinades Islands in 1427.

Their subordinate officers in the Roman navy, at least for the period recorded by Pseudo-Kodinos (*De Off.*, III, 15–28), were the *Megas Drongarios* of the Fleet; the Admiral; the *Prôtokomès*; the *Drongarioi*, and the *Comites* or *Komitas*. The *Megas Drongarios*, a sort of vice-admiral or state under-secretary of the navy, belonged to the category of the Imperial *Stratarches*, and his rank relative to the *Megas Dukas* was the same as that



Officer at the left of an image of the Betrayal of Christ, 1289–90; his white bonnet, of a Western style, may be significant. This might be one of the first representations of the new regiments raised for the fleet of Michael VIII; the *Gasmouloi* were serving in Lakonia, where this painting survives, for several decades before the creation of the fresco. (Detail from fresco, *in situ* Church of Panaghia Chrisafitissa, Chrisafa, Lakonia; author's photo)

of the *Megas Drongarios* of the *Vighla*, a regiment of the Guard, relative to the *Megas Domestikos*.

The Admiral (Αμηραλιος) was the *praefectus classis* (commander of the fleet) under the direct command of the *Megas Dukas*. The military operations around the Hellespont at the time of Andronikos II, in concert with the Genoese fleet, were performed by naval officers called *amiralès*, together with the *Megas Drongarios* of the *Ploimon* (Pachymeris, 1835, II, pp.529, 573 and 593). It is interesting to note that on this occasion another Imperial officer is also mentioned, the *Vestiarios* (Pachymeris, 1835, II, 556), who was already dealing with the organization and armament of the fleet in the time of the 9th–11th century Macedonian dynasty. On another occasion, in 1349, command of the war fleet was divided between another court officer, the *Protostrator* Fakeolatos, and the *Megas Dukas* Tzamplakon.

The *Drongarioi* of the fleet corresponded, more and less, to our ranks of vice-admirals, commodores and ships' captains. *Strategoi* commanders of ships are also mentioned by Kantakouzenos. When Michael VIII reorganized the fleet in 1261, he assigned the new military units he created to the navy and organized them into a number of groups or divisions, placed under the command of *lochagoi*, *tagmatarchai*, *komètés* and *navarchoi*, corresponding approximately to ships' captains, regimental commanders, commanders of naval squadrons, and admirals.

The *Gasmouloi* also had their own ranks. In Thessaloniki, at the time of the rise of Kantakouzenos, they were under the command of a particular authority, the *Idiazousa archè nautikou*. Both heavy and light infantry were usually embarked; the former are called by Kantakouzenos *oplitai*, while the simple sailors or rowers are called *nautai* (Kantakouzenos, 1831, III, 74).

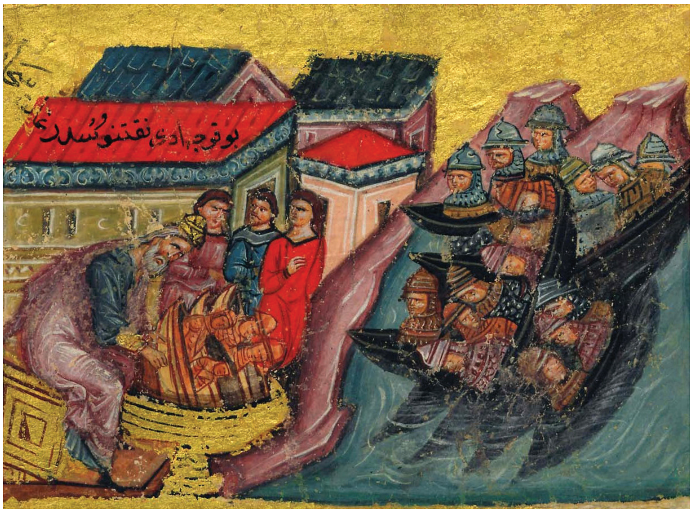
Later strengths

The numbers of ships varied considerably, but in the mid-14th century the permanent Imperial navy was a shadow of that reconstituted by Michael VIII in the 1260s–70s. According to Gregoras, of 100 ships raised in 1348–49 for the war against the Genoese only nine were state warships, while the rest were equipped and armed at the expense of wealthy citizens and crewed by 'labourers' (little wonder that most of the fleet was abandoned to the enemy without a fight).

According to Kantakouzenos, in the later 14th century the total naval resources were increased to some 200 vessels including both requisitioned merchantmen and warships, but it is not clear if all the war galleys were really flying the Imperial flag, since the emperor provided only nine or ten warships to an allied Catalan-Venetian fleet in 1352. It is also notable that on most occasions the sources mention no more than ten galleys in Imperial service at any given time, e.g. during the negotiations between Sigismund of Hungary and the Emperor Manuel II in 1396, prior to the Nicopolis crusade.

The last fleet of the Roman Empire, in the final siege of 1453, included ten Imperial Roman galleys out of a fleet of 26–39 vessels, as follows: the ten largest (5 Genoese, 3 Cretan, 1 Anconitan and 1 Roman), drawn up along the boom between the Porta Horaea and Galata; 17 square-rigged ships; 3 merchant armed galleys from the Venetian colony of Tana; 2 light Venetian galleys and 5 unarmed Roman galleys, drawn up in the Golden Horn; 1 Catalan galley, and 1 Provençal galley. Thus, the balance of vessels were mainly Italian. Some other ships, presumably including the four remaining Roman galleys, were disarmed and scuttled. These figures are given by Barbaro and other minor sources; Giacomo Tetaldi mentions a total of 39 ships, of which 5 were Venetian galleys, 3 Imperial, and 1 belonging to the commander Giovanni Giustiniani. To these ships were added later an Imperial transport accompanied by 3 hired Genoese galleys from Chios, which broke through the Turkish blockade and whose crews, under Alvise Diedo and Trevisan, participated in the defence of the City.

The Trebizond navy of the 13th and 14th centuries remained a small but effective force under a Grand Admiral (*Megadukas*), who commanded a navy of *katerga* (war galleys) well into the 15th century. In 1396 the last known *Megadukas* was also called the *amyriales* (admiral). The navy of Trebizond was often supported by the fleet of the neighbouring Kingdom of Georgia, on the far south-eastern shore of the Black Sea. From the 13th century this was formed of galleys known by their original Turkish name of *katharga*.



'Nectanebo uses magic to sink the ships of the attacking barbarians': folio 3r from the 14th-century Trebizond manuscript *The Romance of Alexander*, Codex Gr 5. The embarked soldiers wear *chapels-de-fer* over mail hoods; the drawing of their body armour might represent either scale or quilted fabric. (Original in Biblioteca dell'Istituto Ellenico di San Giorgio dei Greci, Venice; facsimile edition, author's collection)

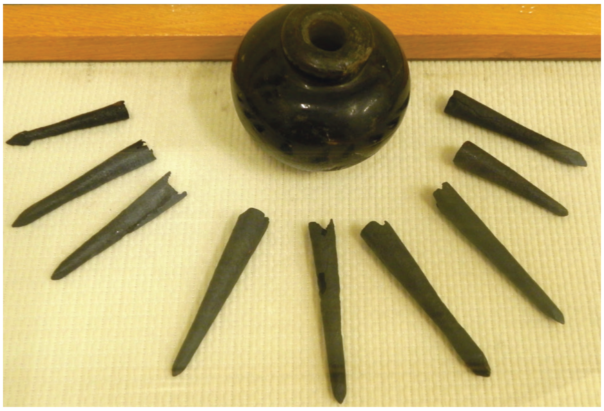
Ships' armament

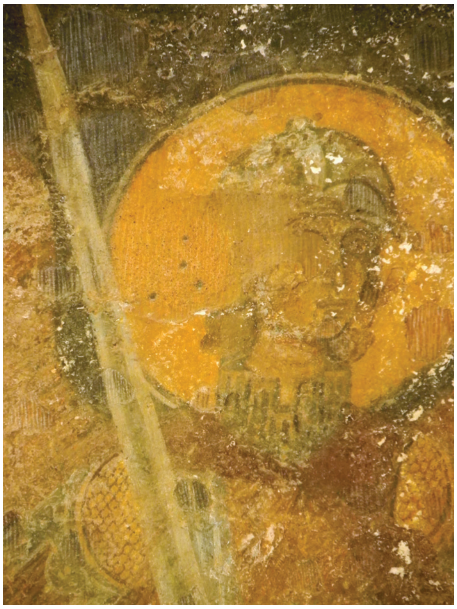
'Greek Fire' was the most famous weapon of the Byzantine arsenals. Although its exact composition and method of use are still unclear despite all the efforts of historians and experimental archaeologists, there is no doubt that it was a flammable liquid projected towards the target through a tube.

Unlike before 1204, Greek Fire seems to have been rarely used during the period under consideration here, and then mainly at sea, where it was very effective despite its short range. However, the sources no longer speak of its being projected by means of 'siphons' (clearly some kind of pump), so incendiary projectiles were now probably fire-pots thrown by means of catapults and mangonels, and hand grenades used at the closest range. Their components included sulphur, tar, resin, naphtha and other flammable materials.

Unfortunately, the evidence for the use of incendiary weapons by the Romans during the last three centuries of the Empire is sparse and ambiguous. There may be a hint of the use of Greek Fire in some verses dedicated to a Roman

Crossbow bolts, and a hand grenade for 'liquid fire', from the equipment of a ship of the 12th–14th centuries – see Plate B. (Author's photo, courtesy Athens Historical Museum)





Head and shoulders of the *Archistratigos* Michail, from a fresco dated to the end of the 13th century. Probably representing a commander of *Tzakones*, the warrior archangel wears full armour and a helmet of Balkan typology, suggesting local construction. Balkan iconography from the late 13th through to the early 15th century characteristically shows various rigid or semi-rigid lamellar throat-guards like this example; another fresco in the same church depicts St George wearing one. (Detail from fresco, *in situ* Church of Aghios Athanasios, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

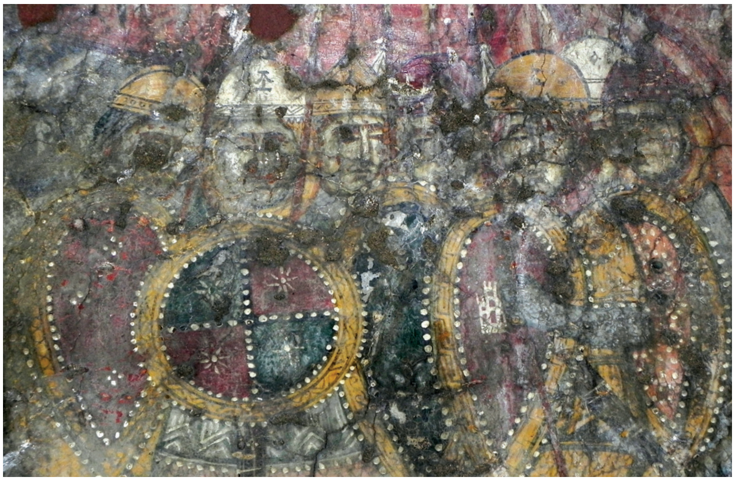
naval operation in the late 13th century (Μανουήλ Φιλής, p.104. 27–31), where the author speaks clearly of δραστικος πυρεκβόλους, 'efficient flame-throwers'. The *Chronica Venetiarum* (p.200) may describe Venetian forces in 1296 burning with Greek Fire a large Imperial ship before the walls of Constantinople, but the passage is unclear. We know that during a battle in 1349 some Roman galleys burned a Genoese cargo ship: 'advancing against the cargo ship, two Imperial triremes sailed by night from Neorion, together with the same number of *moneres*: and although the crew put up fierce resistance, the triremes burned it with the fire' (Kantakouzenos, 74, 18–21). This episode was linked to the Emperor John Kantakouzenos's war against the Genoese colonists of Galata, in which Genoese galleys had just previously attacked the harbours of Byzantium, burning three war galleys (*trieres*) under construction, together with Byzantine cargo ships and houses outside the walls. The 14th-century *Iliad* of Constantine Hermoniakos mentions the use of a 'machine' for the burning of the Greek ships, but the 14th-century translation of the *Alexiad* of Anna Comnena – one of the most important sources regarding liquid fire – does not update the original text's passages relating to the use of siphons to project it.

Gunpowder artillery

The use of firearms by the Imperial army began only at the end of the 14th century. We know that the Italian ships at the final siege of Constantinople in 1453 were equipped with artillery, and probably also the Imperial ones; according to Pseudo-Sphrantzès the crews of the ships along the boom 'daily challenged the Turkish fleet with trumpets, drums, and countless calls; there was exchange of artillery fire every day, but no major action'. The Venetian Barbaro also mentions guns mounted on the defenders' ships.

Character and social status of naval personnel

When not in service under arms the marines and sailors of 13th and 14th-century Byzantium, especially in Constantinople and Thessaloniki, were considered part of the common people, the 'particulars' (ιδιωται). However, unlike other lower social groups, they formed associations or guilds to defend their interests; for instance, in 14th-century Thessaloniki the guild of marines was the most powerful of all. Unlike the military navy neglected by Andronikos II (Pachymeris, 1835, I, IV, 23, p.323), in the 14th century the merchant fleet of the Empire was quite active in transporting merchandise, especially between Thessaloniki and Constantinople. The ports of these cities bustled with crowds of local and foreign merchants, customs officials, interpreters, warehousemen, marines and sailors. Notwithstanding an unsavoury reputation, due to the fact that members were sometimes hired as professional assassins, the seafarers' associations played a significant role in the political life of the City. For example, the guild of marines supported the revolt of the Zealot religious movement in Thessaloniki, and contributed to the expulsion of the nobility. In such situations the leaders of these guilds might be very powerful men, such as Andreas Palaiologos (Kantakouzenos, 1831, III, 94).



The *Tzakones* were as renowned for their service in castle garrisons as they were for marine duties, and such units doubtless bore on their shields appropriate blazons. Castle turrets are visible on a shield at the right of this image of the sleeping guards at the Holy Sepulchre. At left, a shield quartered in red and black or dark blue bears four yellow eight-rayed suns. See reconstruction, Plate D4. (Detail from early 14th-century fresco, *in situ* Church of St John Chrisostomos, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

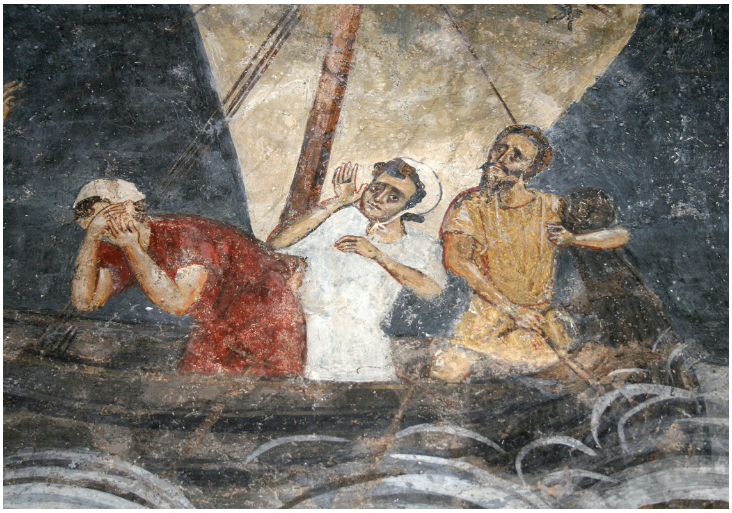
The associations were mainly concerned with controlling the employment of seamen and marines, and settling conflicts that arose between them and the merchant shipowners or ships' captains. Many ex-marines of the Imperial fleet who were employed by commercial interests received contracts for either a fixed salary (αποτακταρης), or a share in the final profits of a voyage (μεριτης). In either case disputes often arose with the captain (*naukléros*), and, since obtaining justice was often a matter of bribery, the marines and sailors needed to form associations to defend their interests. We know that in this period most of the laws regulating navigation and life at sea were still the Rhodian Laws (*Lex Rodiae*), but other codes might conflict with their application, such as the Roman military laws that regulated the lives of the marines of the Imperial navy. Belonging to an association was especially desirable given the rigour of the laws to which seafarers were subject: for instance, a sailor who broke his contract and left the ship before the end of the agreed period was liable to the punishment of 'fustigation' – 70 blows with a cudgel.

Very often, during the 14th and 15th centuries, Roman former sailors and marines of the fleet took to piracy, imitating the Latins and the Turks. In such cases the division of the booty followed the rules of the civil law: the captain received 1½ times the common sailor's share, as did the master carpenter, the cook, the helmsman, and the *karabites* (quartermaster or purser). We do not know if sailors and ex-marines living near the harbour in Thessaloniki were particularly given to piracy, but a document of 1278 attests that they certainly inspired fear among the population; they went armed, and often provoked bloody brawls (Kantakouzenos, 1831, II, 575–577). The streets were violent places, and the indigenous Roman inhabitants were favoured by the authorities over resident Latins. We read, for instance, that in about 1320 the Venetians were often mistreated by both the civilian population and seafarers as well as being harassed by government officials, without recourse to justice (Minoto, p.164).

DRESS & EQUIPMENT

The sources for reconstruction

Any attempt to reconstruct the military attire and equipment of 13th–15th-century marines, seamen and officers requires comparison of the iconography of the period with descriptions in the sources and with archaeological finds. Literary sources are, in fact, not very rich, but there are a number of iconographic sources from the second half of the 13th or early 14th centuries, representing sea battles and marine soldiers,



Detail of the sailors in the fresco 'The legend of St Nicholas', dated to 1259 – see full painting on page 6. The figures are shown wearing the conventional T-shaped *tunica/chitonia*, in red, white and ochre; note also the coif-like white bonnets. (in situ Boyana Church, Sofia, Bulgaria; author's photo)

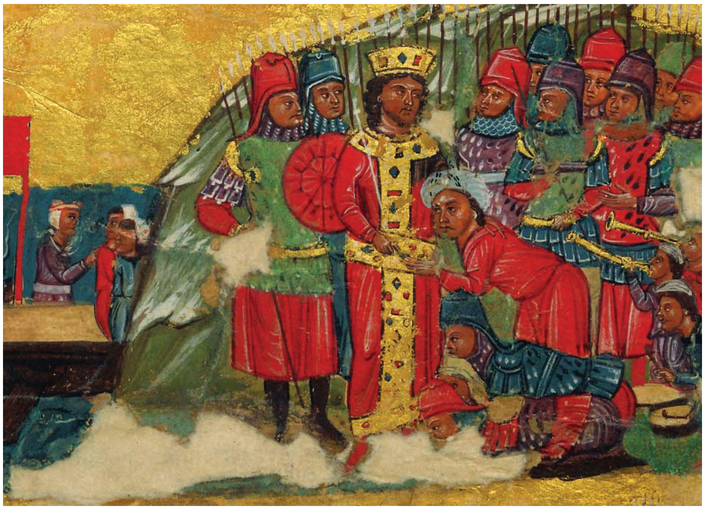
which may assist us. Naturally, our reconstructions can only be tentative, but we feel that the results are not unsatisfactory. Comparison of the written and archaeological sources with the details shown in manuscript miniatures, and church paintings of saints and attendant warrior figures, does seem to confirm the realism of the latter in terms of the material culture of military life.

While the new marine soldiers were considered as *Rhomaioi*, i.e. Greek-speakers embracing Orthodox Christianity, iconographic sources seem to suggest that their military attire had been influenced by both Byzantine and Latin cultures. The *Gasmouloi* mercenaries, in particular, were of mixed descent, so it is plausible that their appearance showed both Western and Eastern influences.

In attempting to reconstruct the equipment of the marine *Tzakones* enlisted by Michael VIII, one must keep in mind that they were ethnically Lakones (Hellenes from ancient Lakonia and Monemvasia). Many historically valuable paintings in Lakonia are linked to their presence there as garrison troops; in places such as Geraki there are many surviving church frescoes representing fighting saints and warriors. The maritime calling of the *Tzakones* is also underlined, for instance, by the presence of St Phokas of Synope in the Church of Aghios Athanasios at Geraki, where the saint (usually considered before St Nicholas as the main protector of mariners throughout 'Romania') is depicted holding a torch to light the way for seafarers. The veneration of St Phokas as a protector of sailors was already widespread in Georgia, in Anatolia, on Naxos in the Aegean, and in Calabria and Puglia in southern Italy, but was very rarely encountered in continental Greece. Apart from the Geraki frescoes, the saint can be seen in a number of others of 13th–14th century date in the Peloponnese and specifically near Monemvasia. It is therefore possible to form the hypothesis that the donors or painters of churches dedicated to the holy protectors of seafarers were people linked with Anatolia or the east of the Empire, perhaps associated with the *Tzakones* by ethnicity.

Dress

The costume of the Imperial officers of the fleet is well known from Pseudo-Kodinos, and is confirmed by the iconography. The description given by Pseudo-Kodinos identifies in detail the various groups of dignitaries by the colour of their hats and their garments; it confirms that in the Palaiologan period headdress had become the most distinctive item of official costume, including that for the fleet. The *Megas Dukas* wore two different types of headgear: a low, red-and-gold embroidered cap or *skiadion*, probably of Mongol or Chinese origin (perhaps in the 14th century with a triangular top and a broad brim); and a tall *skaranikon*, the more official cylindrical headdress of senior Imperial officers, with a rounded or flat top. Also of Oriental origin, this too appears in red and gold embroidered with gold thread. His court garment or *kabbadion* was adorned with geometrical bands attached to the collar, upper arms, cuffs, and vertical front opening, and was worn with a precious belt with silver and gold fittings. Another insignia of his status was the staff, made of various knots of chiselled gold alternating with plain gold sections incised with silver twists. The costume of this most senior naval officer is visible in the portrait of the mid 14th-century fleet commander Alexios Apokaukos now in the Paris National Library.



'Alexander greeting his men': folio 124v from the later 14th-century Trebizond manuscript *The Romance of Alexander*, Codex Gr 5. Note the colours of the clothing and the surcoats worn over body armour. (Original in Biblioteca dell'Istituto Ellenico di San Giorgio dei Greci, Venice; facsimile edition, author's collection)

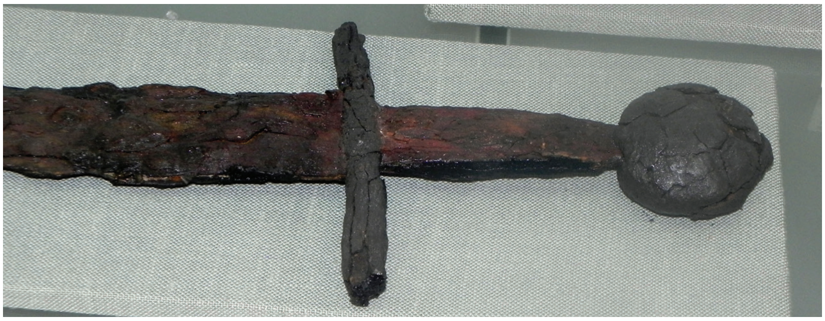
A late 15th-century costume of a *Megas Dukas* appears in a painting in the Old Katholikon of the Great Meteoreon, in Thessaly. The staff is unchanged, but the headgear belongs more to the category of turban or *phakeolis*; the long-sleeved garment is probably of silk, worn together with an Italian mantle richly embroidered and covered with pearls, of the type called a *tamparion*.

Ranking immediately below the *Megas Dukas*, the *Megas Drongarios* of the Fleet dressed in the same court uniform as the *Domestikos* commanding the Imperial regiment of *Skhólai*. It comprised an embroidered hat of *skiadion* type, or a taller *skaranikon* having the emperor's portrait painted on gilded glass on the front and back, and a silk *kabbadion*, but without a staff. The *skiadion*, *skaranikon* and *kabbadion* of the *Amiralios* were like those of the *Praitor* of the People, i.e. again a silk *kabbadion*, while the cylindrical cap again had Imperial portraits on the front and back.

The British Library's manuscript Add Ms 15268, produced in Acre in about 1286, is an *Histoire Universelle* of the world, which (according to Folda, citing Buchtal) is strongly influenced by early Palaiologan-period Byzantine art. In the lower part of folio 105v the figures shown sailing in a ship with lateen sails (see page 4) may well represent the lightly equipped soldiers of mixed blood who formed the core of the *Gasmouloi*. They wear the T-shaped Italian linen or woollen tunic in red or blue, called in period Latin and Greek sources a *tunica*, *gonnella* or *chitonia*. This kind of tunic was worn over an undergarment termed an *interula*, *camicia* or *kamision* (Du Cange, *Gloss.*, col. 563–564, 1752).

The best visual representation of the marines and oarsmen of Byzantium in action that we have encountered is to be found in *The Romance of Alexander*, held by the Venice Hellenic Institute, Codex Gr 5. The miniatures in this splendid manuscript were probably painted by Georgian artists for the Emperor Alexios III Komnenos of Trebizond (r. 1349–90). It is therefore logical to suppose that the soldiers and ships depicted reflect those of the Trebizond Empire, but all the armies of the last Roman states showed a high degree of similarity in dress, weapons and accoutrements.

Of particular interest are folios 3r (see page 19 in this book), 21r, 42r, 43r (see our page 9), 108v, 113v (see page 10), 124r and 124v (see this page). These represent 14th-century Imperial galleys filled with warriors,

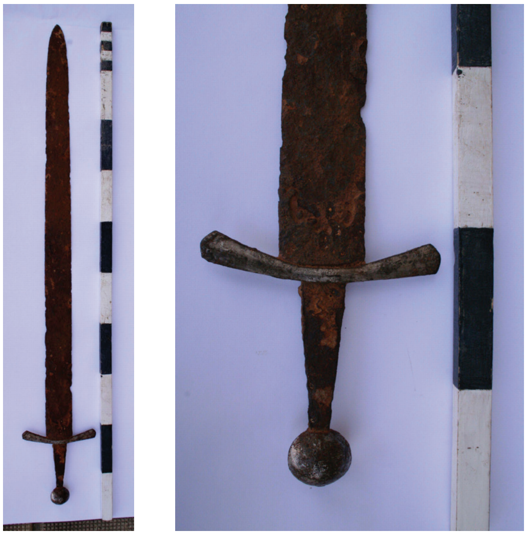


Sword dated to 1222, from the Saranda Kolones castle at Paphos, Cyprus, and identified by Dr Babuin as of Eastern Roman origin. It resembles the sword carried by the tribune depicted in the 'Betrayal' fresco in the Church of St John Chrisostomos at Geraki. (Courtesy District Archaeological Museum, Paphos; author's photo)

oarsmen and fighting sailors. The representations of Eastern Roman galleys show one or two banks of oars, and clean-shaven oarsmen and officers with typical Western European bonnets, as probably worn by the *Gasmouloi*. In other cases they appear to be bare-headed, or wear the characteristic white Eastern Roman turban. Lightly armed crews are seen beside heavy infantrymen, the latter probably embarked troops. As in the Acre manuscript, oarsmen and fighting sailors are dressed in Western or Eastern tunics of blue, light green, pinkish, red or off-white colours, while the soldiers are clad in Byzantine-type heavy armour. In detail, the clothes depicted show the following colours: scarlet, mauve or sky-blue tunics with black collar edging, and scarlet kaftans with gold embroidery (21r); red, blue or green tunics with a Western-style fastening below the neck (42r); blue, red or mauve tunics (43r); red or off-white tunics (108v); red, pinkish or blue kaftans, with Eastern caps (pinkish, blue, red) worn over white bonnets (113v); blue or red tunics with yellow bonnets (124r); red or blue tunics, under scale armour covered with green or red surcoats (124v).

In the church of Stanicenie in Eastern Serbia, the mausoleum of an aristocratic family under the kingdom of the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Alexander has frescoes precisely dated to 1331–32 that show figures of 'evil' soldiers mocking the arrested Christ. They wear half-Frankish, half-Roman attire, and at least two of them have a marine bonnet. These Roman enemies of the Bulgarian Empire are represented in all their equipment, including the great variety of headgear adopted from their neighbours. Various different kinds of headdress, garments and shoes would have been worn by the marines, due to a variety of influences from Latin states and Muslim principates as well as Byzantium itself.

13th-century sword from Rouse, Bulgaria. This resembles the sword of St George depicted in a fresco in the Church of Aghios Georgios tou Kastrou at Geraki, Lakonia. (Rouse Museum; photos courtesy Prof Valeri Yotov)



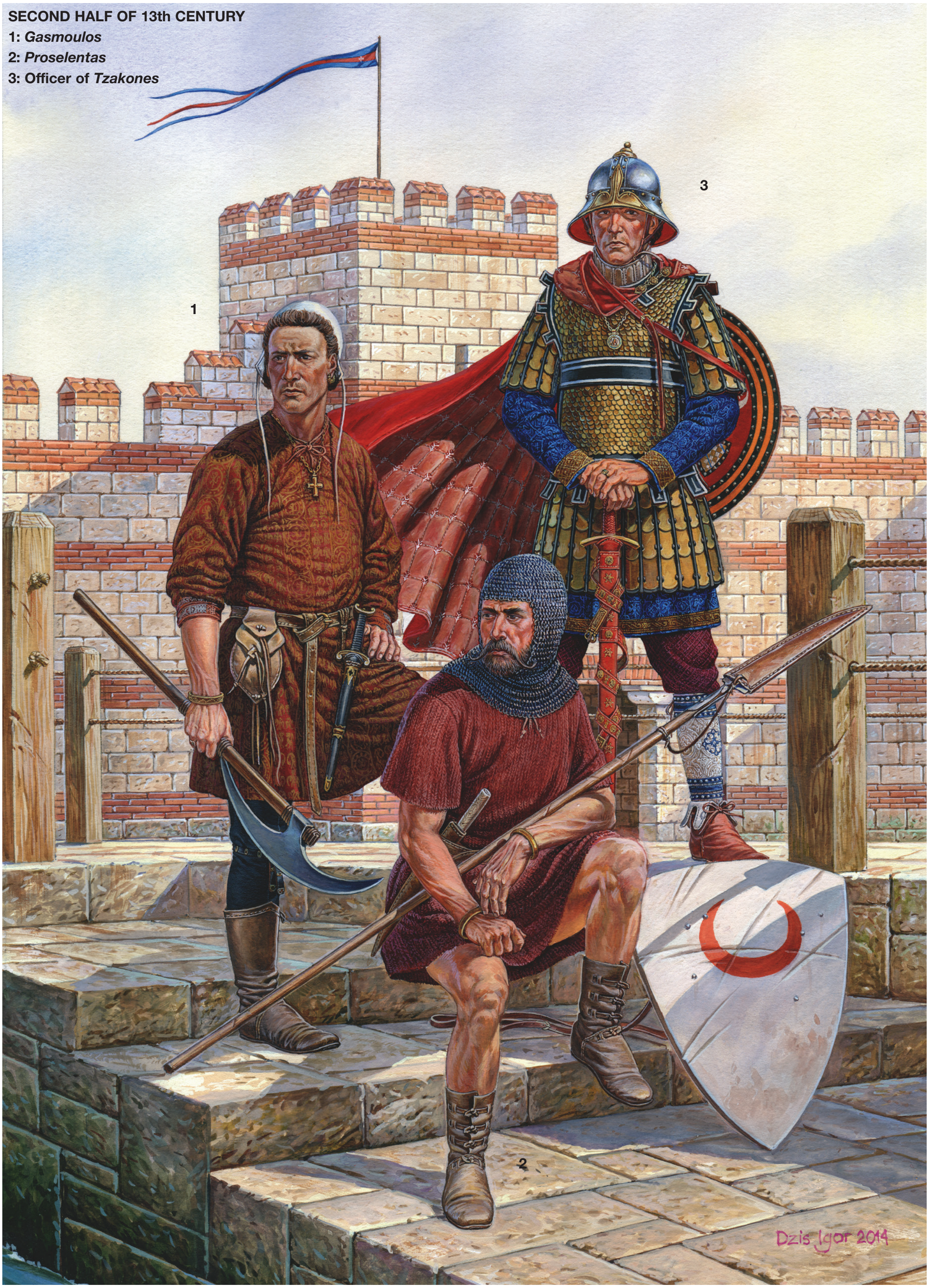
Finally, we must remember that the use of amulets, such as crosses and pendants with images of military saints, was a prerogative of the Christian soldier. It would not have been surprising to see these worn around the necks of many *Tzakones* or *Gasmouloi*. Also, considering their profession, it is highly probable that many of them wore talismans and icons with the image of St Nicholas, protector of seamen.

Weapons

The iconography suggests the kinds of military gear used by the *Gasmouloi*, *Tzakones* and *Prosalentai* in the 13–14th centuries. At times, these seem to differ considerably from their description as lightly equipped warriors, but we must remember that the relevant passages in Pachymeris and Gregoras relate to the earlier phase of their recruitment, while later sources such as Sphrantzès also speak of their skills as cavalrymen, infantrymen and javelineers.

(Continued on page 33)

SECOND HALF OF 13th CENTURY
1: ***Gasmoulos***
2: ***Proselentas***
3: **Officer of** ***Tzakones***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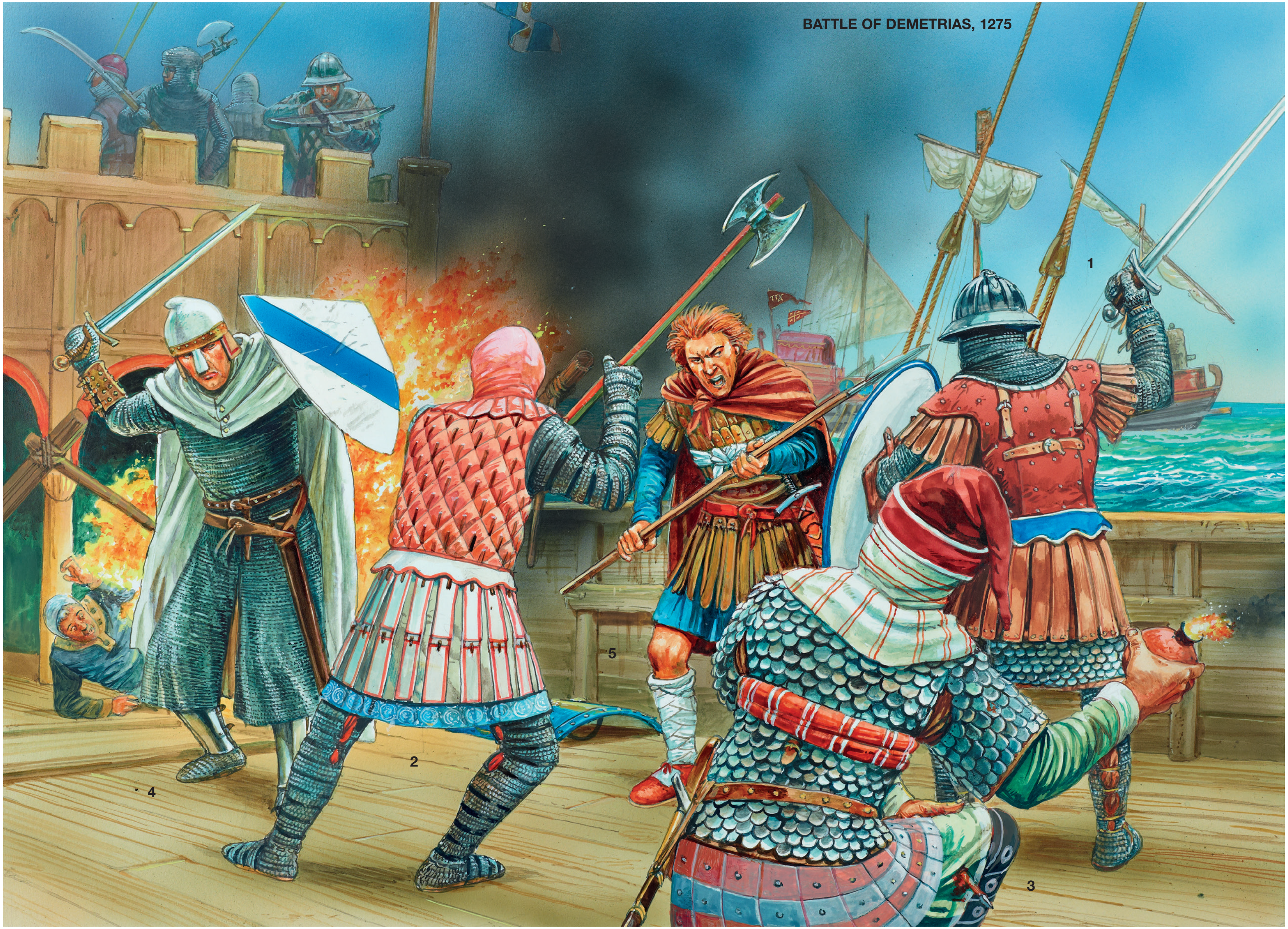
BATTLE OF DEMETRIAS, 1275
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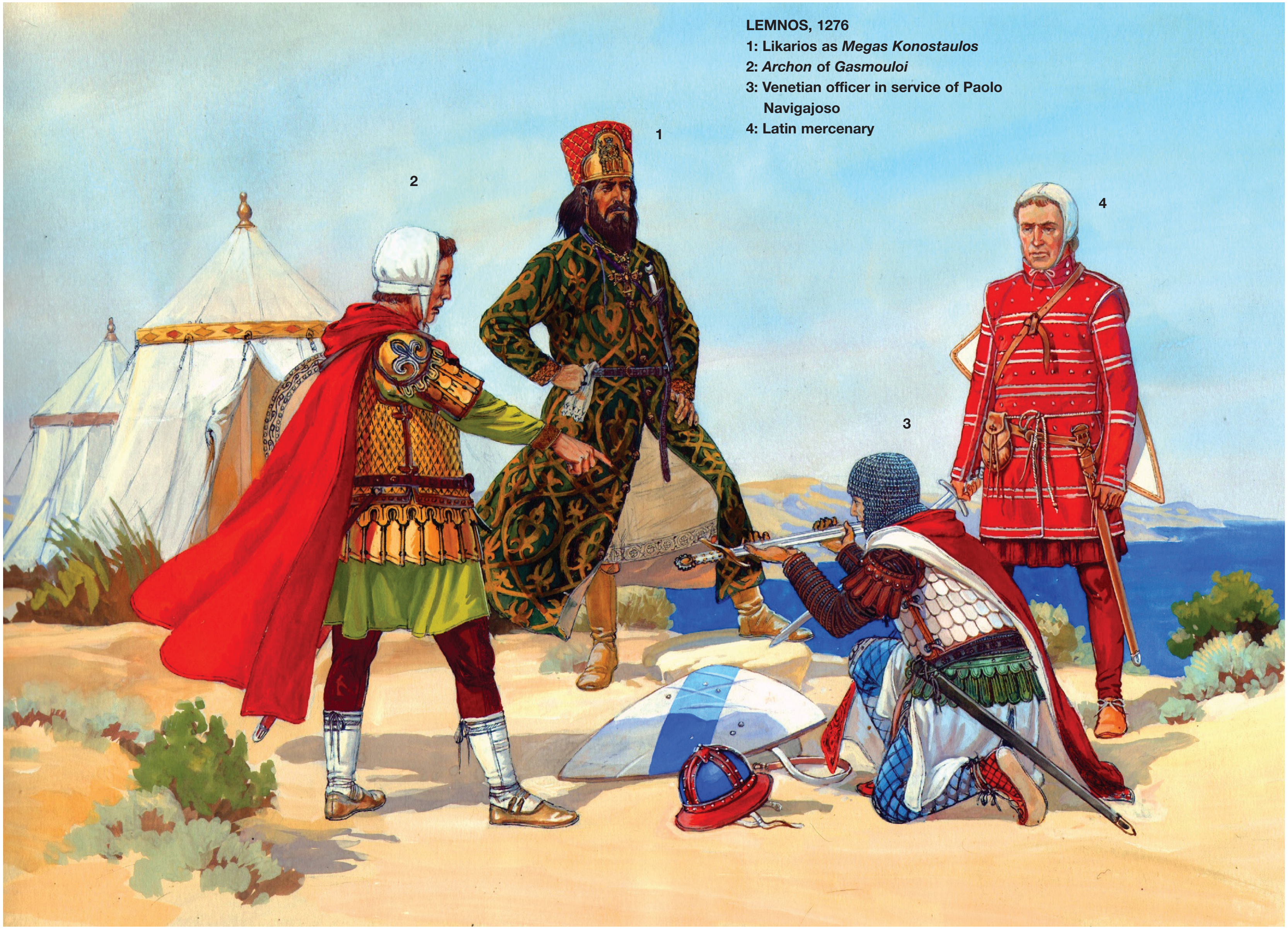
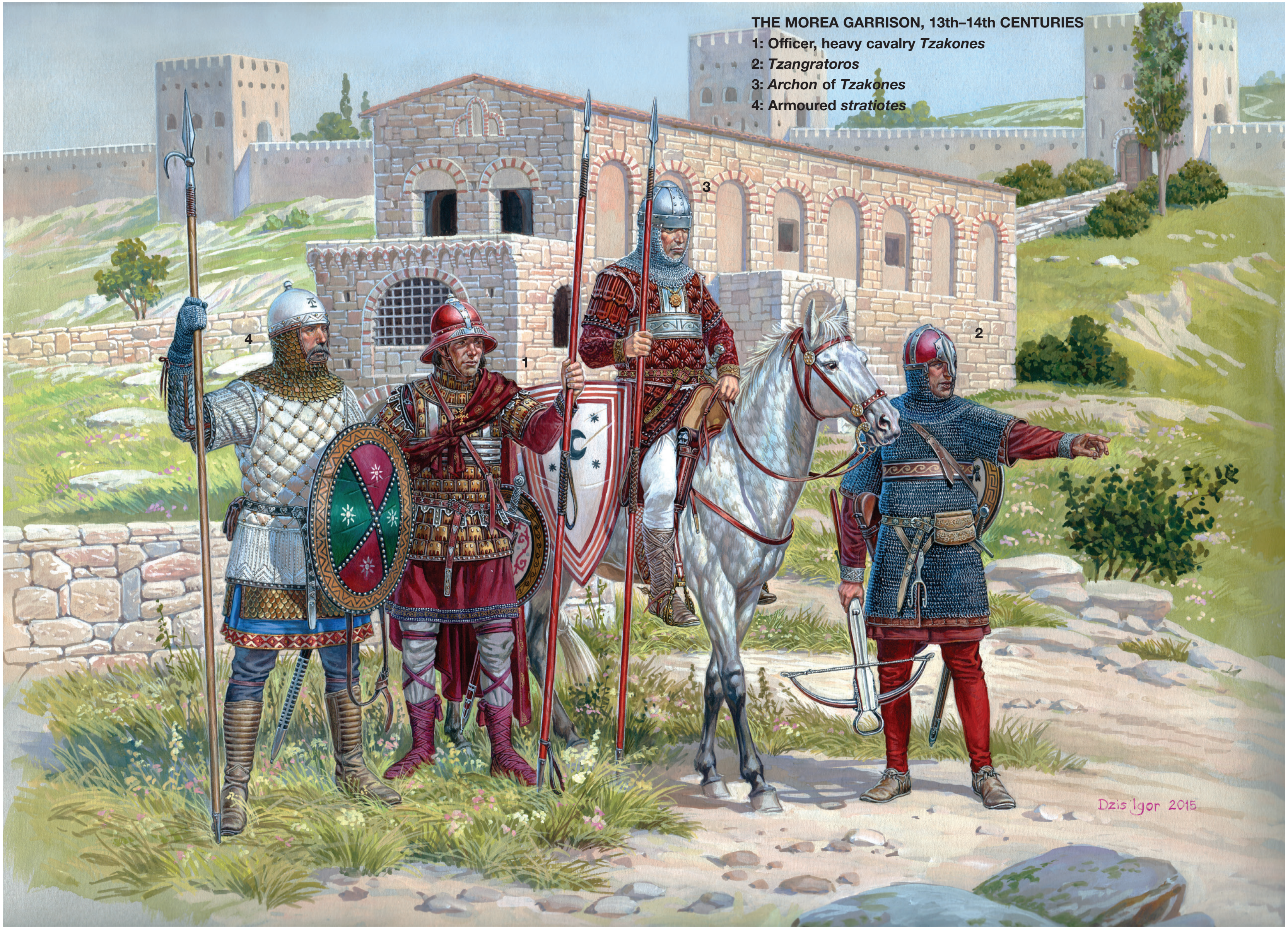


LEMNOS, 1276
1: Likarios as *Megas Konostaulos*
2: *Archon* of *Gasmouloi*
3: Venetian officer in service of Paolo Navigajoso
4: Latin mercenary



THE MOREA GARRISON, 13th–14th CENTURIES

1: Officer, heavy cavalry *Tzakones*

2: *Tzangratoros*

3: *Archon* of *Tzakones*

4: Armoured *stratiotes*

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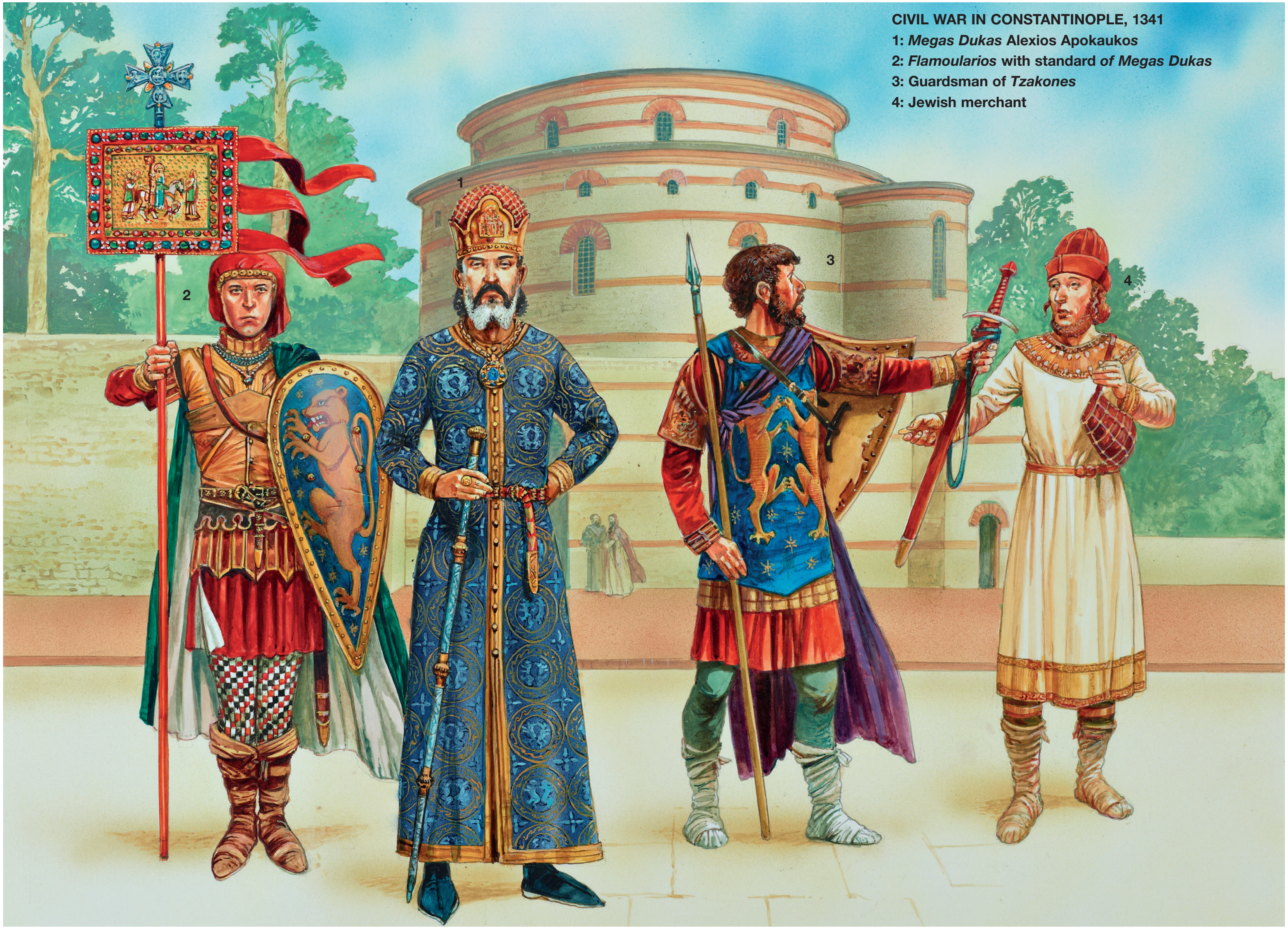
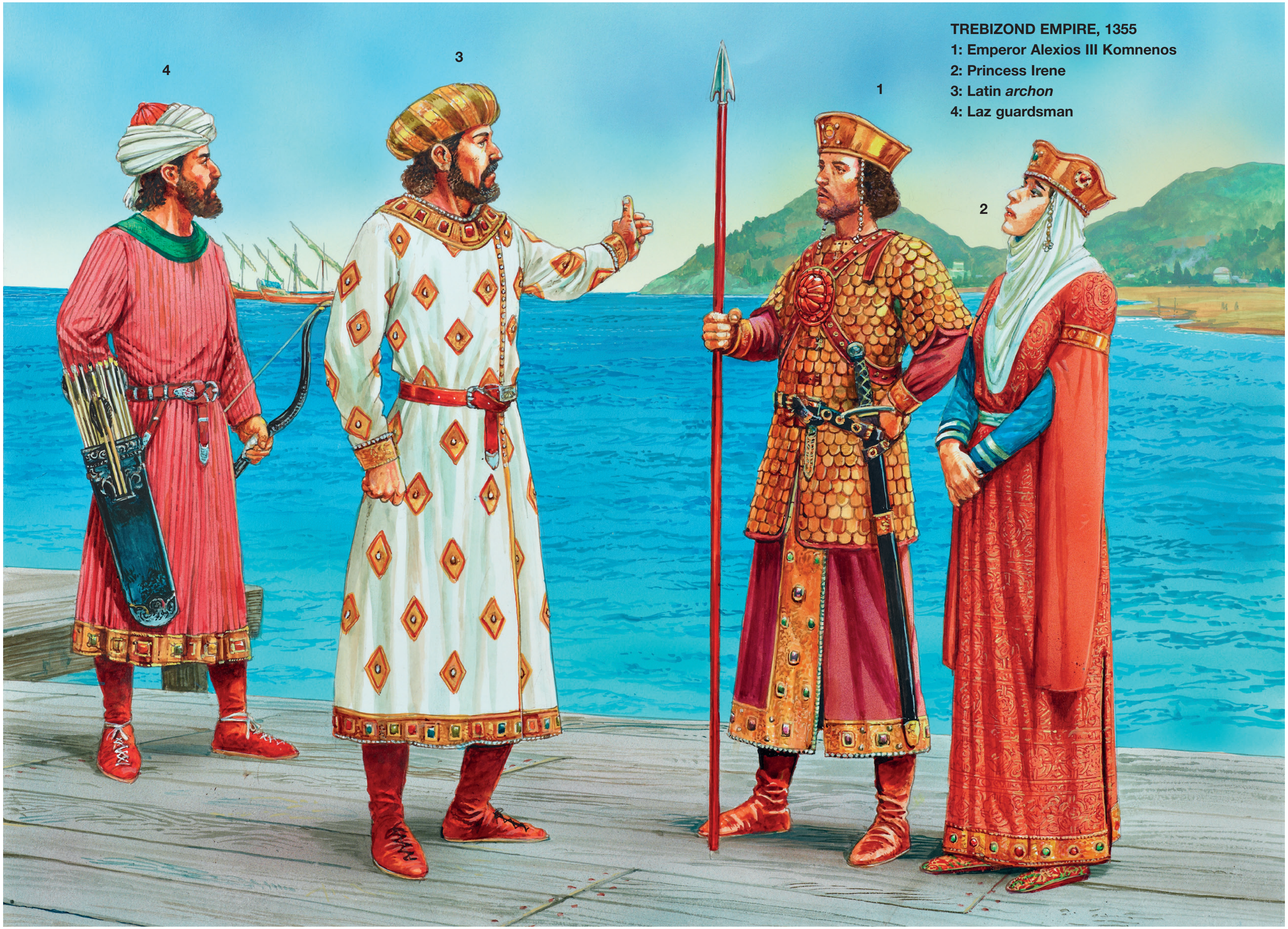


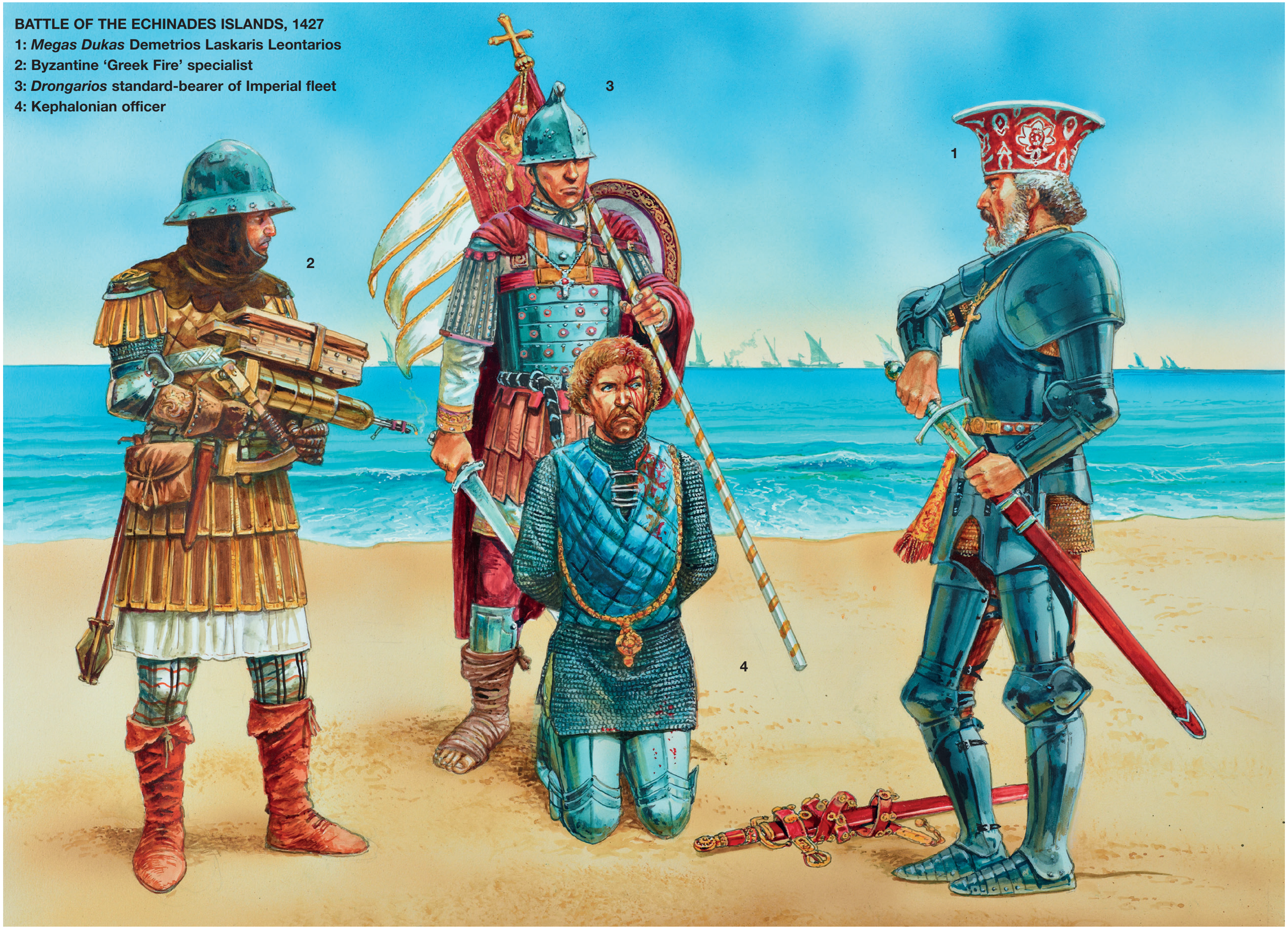
CIVIL WAR IN CONSTANTINOPLE, 1341
1: *Megas Dukas* Alexios Apokaukos
2: *Flamoularios* with standard *of Megas Dukas*
3: Guardsman of *Tzakones*
4: Jewish merchant

E



TREBIZOND EMPIRE, 1355
1: Emperor Alexios III Komnenos
2: Princess Irene
3: Latin *archon*
4: Laz guardsman

F



BATTLE OF THE ECHINADES ISLANDS, 1427

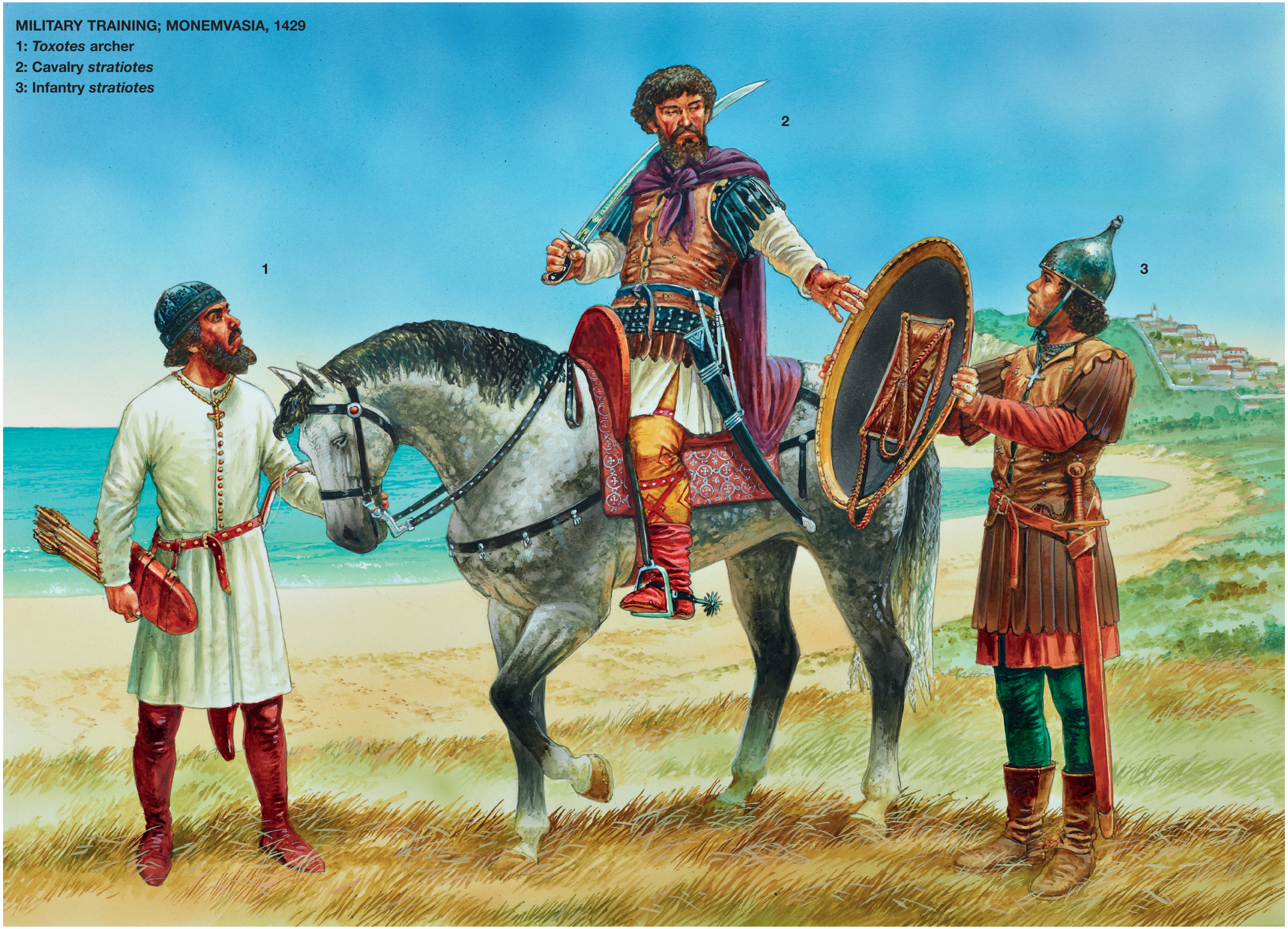
1: *Megas Dukas* Demetrios Laskaris Leontarios

2: Byzantine ‘Greek Fire’ specialist

3: *Drongarios* standard-bearer of Imperial fleet

4: Kephalonian officer

G

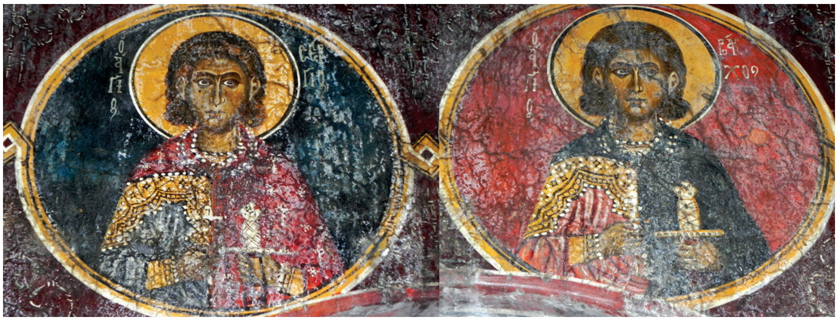


MILITARY TRAINING; MONEMVASIA, 1429

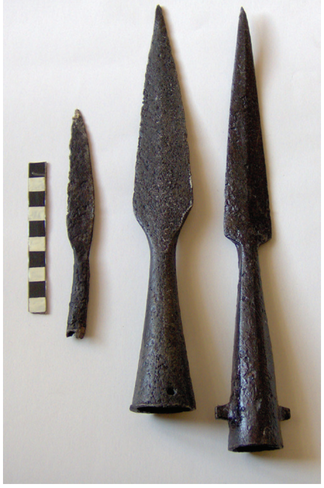
1: *Toxotes* archer

2: Cavalry *stratiotes*

3: Infantry *stratiotes*

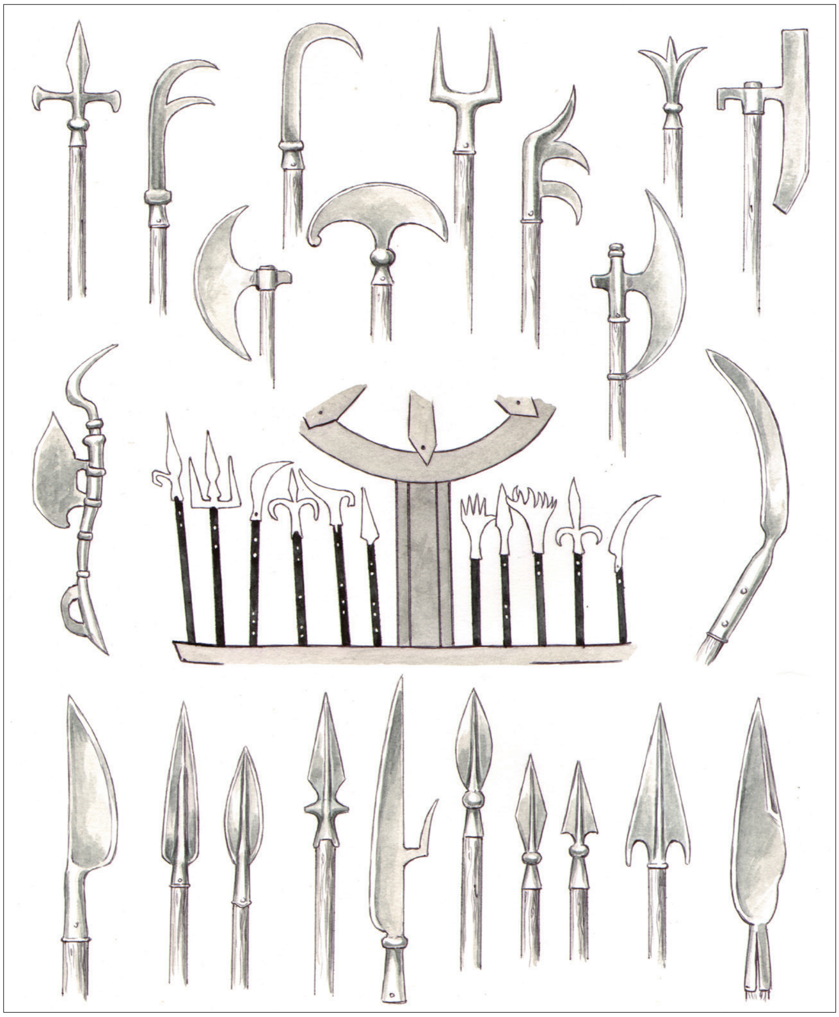


Early 14th-century fresco of warrior saints holding broadswords. (*in situ* Church of St John Chrisostomos, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

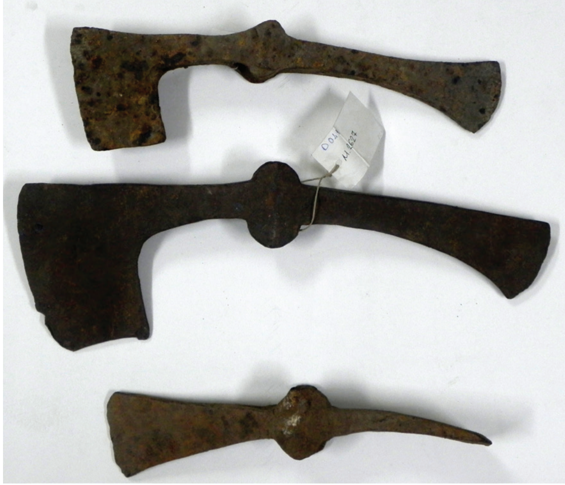


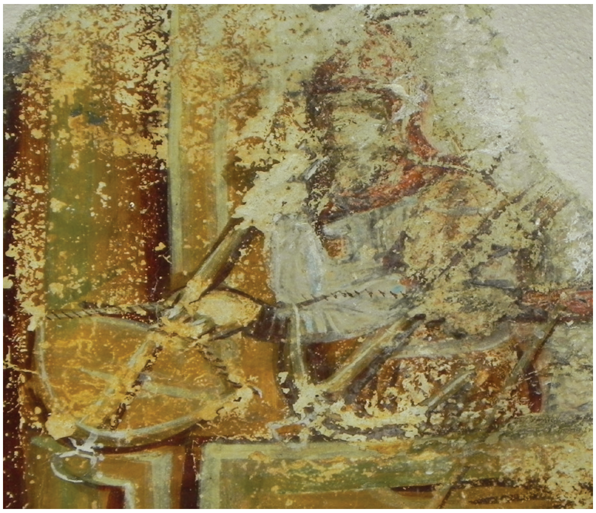
Javelin and spearheads, 13th–14th centuries, from the fortress of Pleven, Bulgaria. (Photos courtesy Prof Valeri Yotov)

We can note in the iconography the presence of swords, daggers, spears and javelins, and crossbows, and such images can be matched with weapons of the same period found in the territory of the Byzantine Empire. For example, the axe in folio 105v of the Acre Ms finds a perfect parallel in a 13th or 14th-century specimen now in the museum at Kazanlik in present-day Bulgaria, while the sword of St George in the Church of Aghios Georgios tou Kastrou at Geraki resembles a 13th-century find now in the museum of Rouse, Bulgaria. Another 13th-century sword



Selection of spearheads and other bladed polearms copied from miniatures of the 13th–15th centuries. (Drawings by Igor Dzis, ex-Babuin)





LEFT
Eastern Roman battleaxes, 13th–14th centuries, from Constantinople and Anatolia. (Courtesy Haluk Perk Museum, Istanbul; author's photo)

RIGHT
Detail from a fresco 'The conquest of Jericho', c.1260–90. Despite the damage, *tzangratoroi* crossbowmen can be made out among the city's defenders; see reconstruction, Plate D2. Constantine Hermoniakos, in his 14th-century *Iliad*, gives a clear description of the Roman crossbow of that period (vv. 237ff, pp.86–90): '...the bow and the central support formed a T. Where they came together there was a ring like a stirrup. A semi-circular iron ring hung from a wide belt around the hips of the bowman. The bow was strung by pressing the stirrup to the ground with the foot while the right hand, with the help of a spanning hook, pulled the string while the left hand pressed the bow to the ground. Then the string was fastened to a nut by which the device was shot.' (*in situ* Church of the Taxiarchon, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

was found in the castle of Saranda Kolones at Paphos on Cyprus; Dr Andrea Babuin of the University of Ioannina correctly attributes this to an Eastern Roman origin, and its shape and pommel correspond perfectly with a sword represented in the 'Betrayal' fresco in the Church of St John Chrisostomos at Geraki. The sword from Cyprus was found together with a bronze chape of a very particular shape, which again is visible only in Eastern Roman paintings of the period. These examples are confirmation that the artists who depicted these warriors had before them real-life models and were not simply following artistic conventions. The swords visible in the hands of marines in the iconography are either long and straight, sometimes tapering slightly towards the tip, or sabres, which are mostly sharply curved with a regular taper. Italian and German daggers also found their way into the hands of the marines.

Spears, javelins and other shafted weapons used by marines were of many different types (see drawings on page 33). Besides the more usual shapes of such weapons, the fighting men of the fleet made widespread use of the *dorudrepana*, a scythe-like blade mounted upon a shaft, to cut the enemy's rigging. These are probably the same weapons called *falci* by John Kananos when describing their use by the Turks at the siege of Byzantium in 1422 (lines 305–317, 404–408).

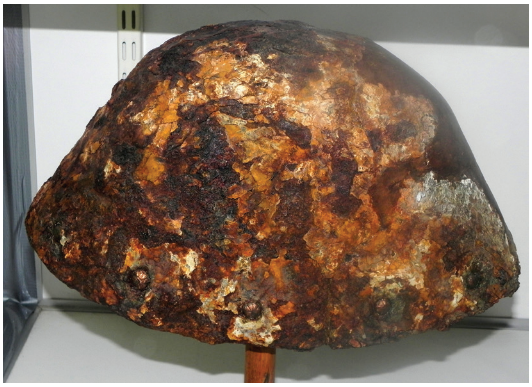
While the use of the 'self' bow and arrow was limited to the Cretans, the images of naval clashes and the iconography of *Tzakones*, especially at Geraki, confirm the use of the crossbow. This was called the *tzangra*, a derivation from the Latin *cancer* (crab) because of the weapon's shape, and was widely employed by the *tzangratoroi* of the Imperial army aboard ships. Kantakouzenos calls the crossbow the 'Latin bow' (1828, I, 174; 1986, p.123), and many of these specialist troops were of Western origin.

Defensive equipment:

Helmets

The brimmed *chapel-de-fer*, introduced to Byzantium by Westerners and especially by German crusaders, is well attested in the Aegean area; this is confirmed by the specimen from Saranda Kolones castle at Paphos (though its shape today has been modified by the destruction in an earthquake of the building in which it was kept). This find is dated to 1222, but the same type is visible in many miniatures representing marines, where the 'war-hat' is shown in many variants. The skull is sometimes 'onion-shaped', sometimes rounded and relatively tall, with a brim either flat and usually wide, or narrow and sloping downwards. Made either in one piece or in two segments united in a central comb, these helmets were about 24cm (9.5in) high, and had an approximate diameter of 40cm (15.75 inches).

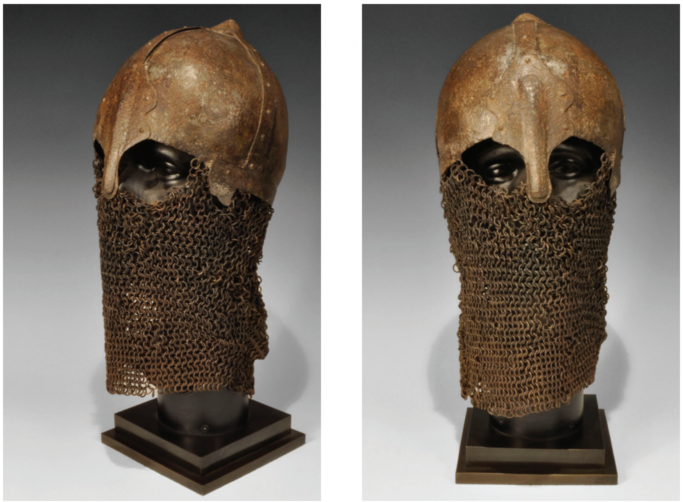
Another kind of helmet found among the *Tzakones* was the typical *spangenhelm*, visible in many paintings at Geraki. These helmets of segmented construction are paralleled by archaeological specimens, like that from Novakovo, or the example from the fortress of Asenova Krepost today preserved in the museum at Plovdiv. The latter helmet is approximately 19cm (7.5in) in height, with a base diameter of 18–22cm (7–8.6 inches). The thickness of the iron is about 0.1cm (0.04in), and the helmet is made in ten parts. Four concave segments, placed vertically and fastened with small rivets, are united at the bottom by a riveted horizontal band, in which there are still small holes to attach a chinstrap and a soft inner lining. The apex was closed by a small cap or 'lid', and fragments of ringmail found with the helmet show the presence of a mail aventail, as illustrated in the Geraki frescoes.



Iron 'war-hat' helmet dated to 1222, from Saranda Kolones castle at Paphos, Cyprus; its shape is distorted by later earthquake damage to the building in which it was held. (Courtesy District Archaeological Museum, Paphos; author's photo)

Local shapes of helmets linked to the Mediterranean tradition were widely used both by the Eastern Romans and the Venetians. Some are simply conical, constructed from one or two pieces of iron. To this category belongs a particular typology: rounded, often tall, and usually having a decorative finial at the apex. As a general rule helmets had attached mail or scale aventails, or were worn over a Western-style mail coif or a leather hood. The extension of the hood can sometimes be linked with descriptions referring to the employment of a gorget (*peritrachelion*) to protect the throat, of either mail or plate. (See page 46 for drawings of a wide selection of helmets copied from manuscript illustrations, and of a recent find from the Kuban.)

Eastern Roman helmet with ringmail aventail, 13th–14th centuries. (Private collection; photo courtesy TimeLine Auctions)



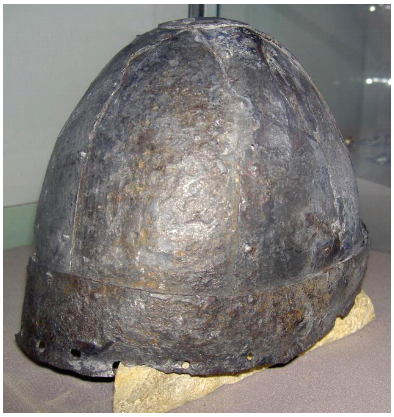
Body armour

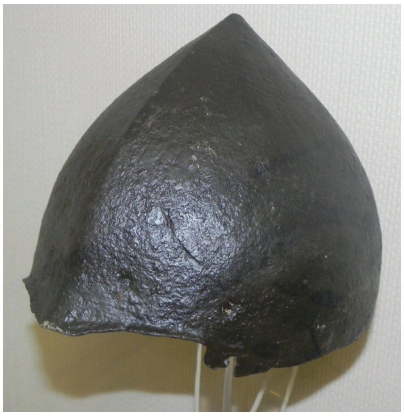
The instructions for warriors of Theodore Palaiologos, written in 1326, prescribe the *pourpoint*, the *hauberjon* and the *cuiriee*, sometimes worn with a *gambeson*, and these typical Western protections are also visible in the iconography.

The *pourpoint*, a padded or quilted soft armour worn outermost, is often visible in depictions of the *Tzakones*, e.g. at Geraki, where they are worn either as sole protection or over ringmail. These padded surcoats are probably what the Greek sources call *epilorikia*; they are sometimes very decorative, and frequently present *kremasmata* (protective strips,

LEFT
Iron 13th–14th-century *spangenhelm* from Novakovo, Bulgaria, now in the Dobrich Museum. (Photo courtesy Dr Stanimir Dimitrov)

RIGHT
One of the latest forms of Eastern Roman helmet that we know of from archaeology is this 15th-century specimen from Halkis. Finds in Greece and Cyprus reveal the use of such local variations of the Italian bascinet, made in one piece. (Courtesy Athens Historical Museum; author's photo)





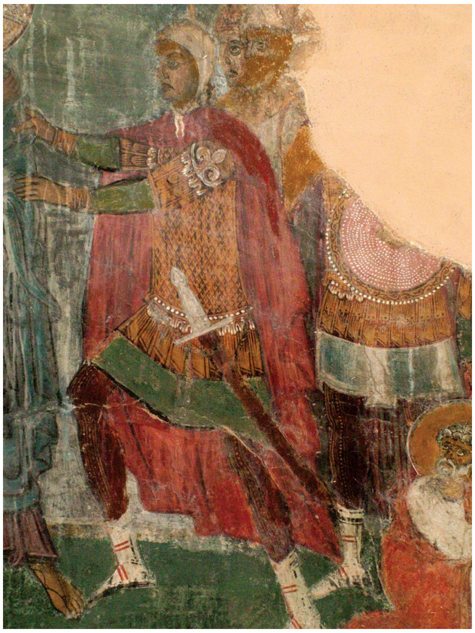
derived from the old *pteryges*) at the shoulders and waist. The *epilorikion* might also sometimes be just a sort of cloth garment covering the main armour, suggesting an Oriental influence.

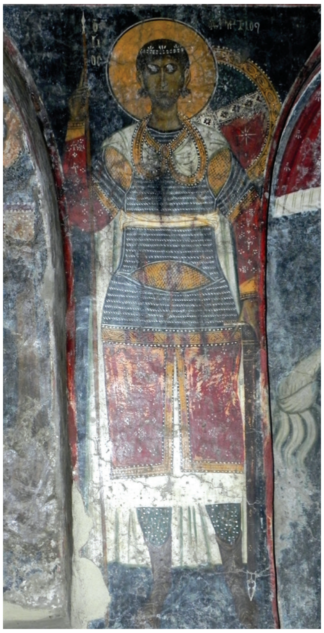
Some *epilorikia* are shown worn over a full mail hauberk (*amphion* or *lorikion*), equivalent to the Frankish term *hauberjon*. The Roman mail hauberk of the period might be either short- or long-sleeved, with either attached or separate mittens. Some hauberks extended only slightly below the waist while others fell almost to the knee, and they were not always covered with fabric garments. The Eastern tradition of the scale and lamellar armour, still called *klibanon* in the sources of the period, was strong and widely diffused; many different examples show longer or shorter designs, with scales overlapping either downwards or upwards, and sometimes gilded.

Some cuirasses, of forged iron plate or hardened leather (*cuir-bouilli*), reflect the archaic 'muscled' style, a sign of the still living tradition of the Greco-Roman world and no less effective in their defensive purpose. Besides these, the iconography shows metal or hardened leather lamellar

BOTTOM LEFT
Detail of the *chiliarchos* or tribune in the 'Betrayal' fresco, c.1289–90. He wears a white bonnet; the short-sleeved, hip-length body armour of quilted fabric has leather protective strips hanging below the decorated belt. The shoulder protection, perhaps of *cuir bouilli* in the Italian style, displays a *fleur-de-lys* decoration. (*In situ* Church of Panaghia Chrisafitissa, Chrisafa, Lakonia; author's photo)

BOTTOM RIGHT
Detail from an early 14th-century fresco of St Demetrios. He is depicted wearing a short-sleeved, crotch-length ringmail hauberk; at the shoulders, beneath his white cloak, two cape-like areas of small, gilded scales are visible hanging over the hauberk. The ringmail shirt is worn over a long-sleeved, knee-length, and probably padded red garment decorated with bands and close patterning in gold, over a longer white tunic. Between the latter's hem and his short leather boots, reinforced *sidera gonatia* stockings are clearly visible. (in situ Church of St John Chrisostomos, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)



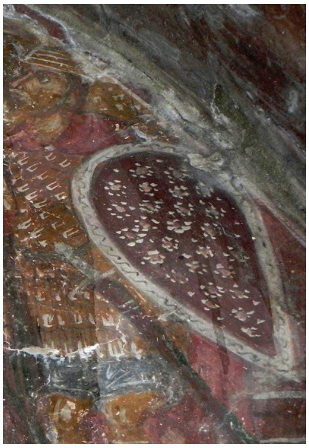


cuirasses of distinctive Italic or Turco-Mongol styles. Very often the protection of trunk, hips and arms is by composite elements in iron, leather, felt and other padded materials. Under the armour, again, the Romans employed padded or quilted cloth garments to protect against chafing and to help absorb blunt trauma. These too were often fitted with hanging strips, or their surface was sewn and divided in separated sections, giving the impression of the old *pteryges*.

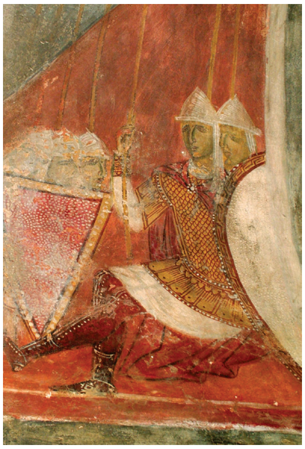
When not sufficiently covered by a sleeved mail hauberk the upper arms were protected with either *cuir-bouilli* elements, or extended parts of the protective garments worn over or under the main body armour. Gauntlets or *cheroptia*, made in both Western and Eastern styles, protected the hands of heavily armoured embarked troops and of commanders. Legs and feet were protected in various ways: mail stockings (*sidera gonatia*), like the Western *chausses*; metallic greaves (*knìmida*), often used in combination with the mail; and *cuisses* (padded thigh and knee armour). Greaves in hardened leather, often decoratively tooled, were quite common in Italy, and their employment by Romans and Latins must have been the result of an interchange of military technology in the Aegean area.

Shields

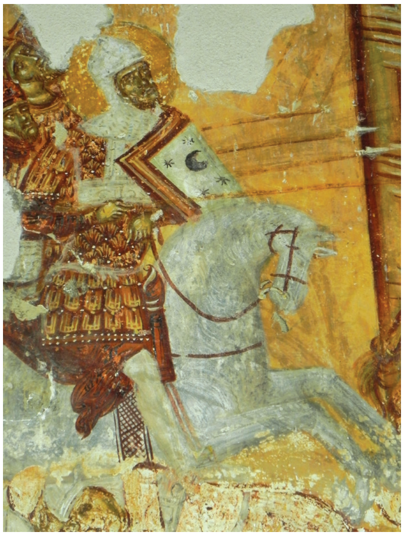
The late 13th and 14th-century Eastern Roman shield was of elongated triangular design, 0.9–1.5m (3–5ft) tall, with a pronounced lateral curve. Its sides were either straight, so creating a triangular shape, or slightly curved. This shield, in its straight or slightly curved form, remained the most used, but the old almond-shaped 'kite' shield is still visible in depictions of *Tzakones* guardsmen both in Constantinople and at Geraki. However, smaller round shields about 61cm (2ft) across were common among marines, and there was also rare employment of large and very



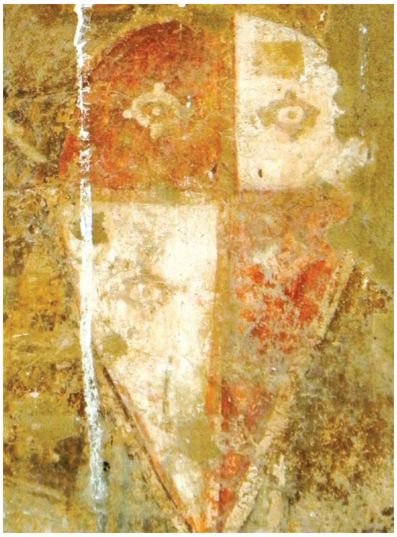
LEFT
A dense pattern of apparently floral motifs is painted on the kite-shaped shield in this detail from a mid 13th-century fresco depicting soldiers at the Crucifixion. (*in situ* Church of Aghios Georgios tou Kastrou, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)



RIGHT
Detail from a fresco of 1289–90, depicting guards at the Holy Sepulchre wearing almost pointed, narrow-brimmed 'war-hat' helmets and scale *klibanon* armours. Note the shields, of both triangular and 'kite' shapes. (*in situ* Church of Panaghia Chrisafitissa, Chrisafa, Lakonia; author's photo)

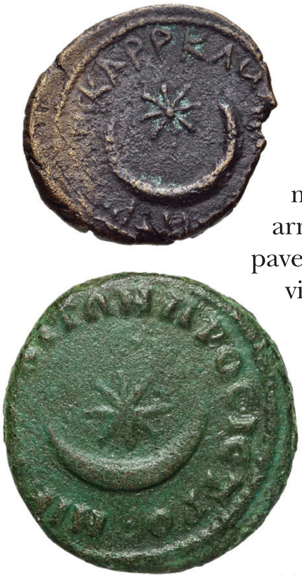


BOTTOM LEFT
Detail from 'The conquest of Jericho' fresco, c.1260–90, showing Joshua's helmet, shield and armour. Note the 'wraparound' effect of the triangular shield with a lateral curve. See reconstruction, Plate D3. (*in situ* Church of the Taxiarchon, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)



BOTTOM RIGHT
Detail showing the quartered blazon on the kite-shaped shield carried by one of Herod's guards in a fresco depicting 'The Massacre of the Innocents', dated to the second half of the 13th century. (*in situ* Church of Aghios Sozon, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

concave round shields (see Plate H3). Shields were constructed of wood, animal hide and iron. It is a matter for discussion whether some shields represented on ships were entirely of metal, but if so it is most probable that they were arranged only to protect the oarsmen. Tall Western pavese-style shields protecting the sides of ships are visible in miniatures in the *Vergilio Riccardiano* of c.1450.



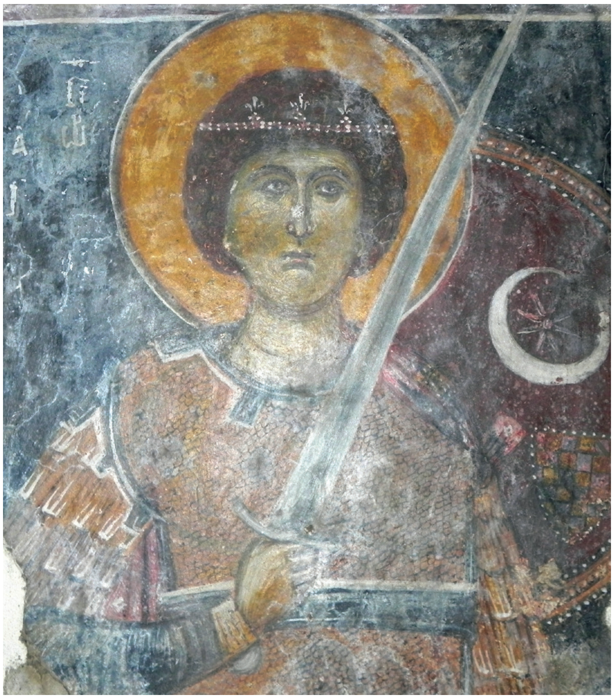
Bronze coins of the Roman emperors Caracalla and Geta, dated to AD 198. For his campaigns against Parthia, Caracalla (sole ruler AD 212–217) enlisted 'picked young men from Sparta, and formed a unit which he called his Lakonian and Pitanate battalion' (Herodian, IV, 8). The crescent moon and eight-rayed sun are still shown a thousand years later as shield blazons in 13th-century church frescoes at Geraki and other Lakonian sites in the Peloponnese. (Private collection)

Shield blazons of the *Tzakones*

We have already suggested (above, 'The sources for reconstructions') that it is reasonable to infer a connection between church frescoes in the Peloponnese both with Lakonian military culture, and also with a seafaring tradition.

A fresco in the Church of Aghios Georgios tou Kastrou (St George of the Castle) at Geraki, painted in the second half of the 13th century, shows the saint in military harness, and in the background a round shield with a red-brown surface, small white dots on the outer rim, a crescent moon in the centre, and inside this a sun with eight rays. This symbol, with some variations, can also be found in other local churches, together with shield decorations of flowers, 'meanders' and swastikas. Another crescent and eight-rayed sun surrounded by three suns may be seen at St George of the Castle. The red-brown shield of St George painted in the early 14th century in the Church of St John Chrisostomos shows 'meanders' in ochre, enclosed by a double line of white dots (probably representing silver nails, or even pearls), and an eight-rayed sun within a central crescent of light brown colour. In the Church of St Athanasios, St George's shield again has the crescent moon with eight-rayed sun, and around it radiant 'planets' of circular shape (see page 39). A crescent moon surrounded by four eight-rayed suns is depicted in the Church of the Taxiarchon (Supreme Angelic Commander) at Geraki.

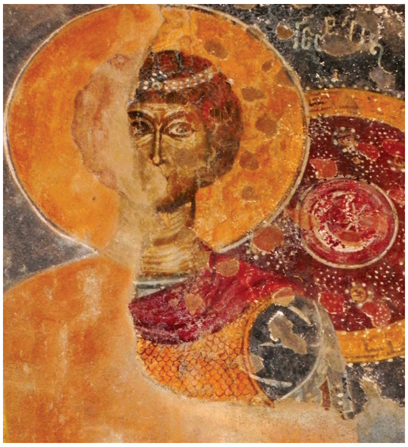
Detail from a fresco depicting St George, dated to the second half of the 13th century. The round red-brown shield has a triple line of white dots around the edge, probably representing stars, and a blazon of a white crescent surrounding a gold eight-rayed sun. This seems to indicate a continuity of tradition from Greco-Roman pagan times to the *Tzakones* transplanted into the Christian army of the Eastern Empire. (*In situ* Church of Aghios Georgios tou Kastrou, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)



A thousand years before this period the crescent and the eight-rayed sun were already associated with Lakonian troops raised by the Emperor Caracalla in AD 212–217, and during the slightly earlier reign of Septimius Severus the emperor and empress were venerated as the Sun and the Moon, symbols of Eternal Empire (*Aeternitas Imperii*). In the 4th century the sun and crescent moon may be seen as symbols of the eternal and universal Empire on the shield of the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, represented together with Alexander the Great on nine gold *solidi* now preserved in the Bibliothèque National de

France in Paris.

From the Geraki frescoes we may infer that the *Tzakones* displayed symbols attesting to the continuity of the eternal Empire from pagan times into the Christian era. The crescent moon, already a symbol of the Lakones and of the city of Byzantion since ancient times, was probably revived by the Palaiologoi after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261. The late 13th-century manuscript Ms Ars 5211 – held by the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, and probably produced in Acre by the same school that produced manuscript Add Ms 15268 now in the British Library – shows the marching army of Holofernes (folio 252) depicted like Palaiologan troops, and with flags including the crescent and eight-rayed sun. Another important parallel can be found in a fresco of 1259 in the celebrated Boyana Church, considered the masterpiece of medieval Bulgarian churches. The scene of the miracle of St Nicholas at sea shows a ship manned by sailors dressed in Western style, and shields arranged on the small stern-castle bearing separate crescent and sun blazons (see page 6). There is a strong possibility that the ship represented belongs to the Roman Empire.



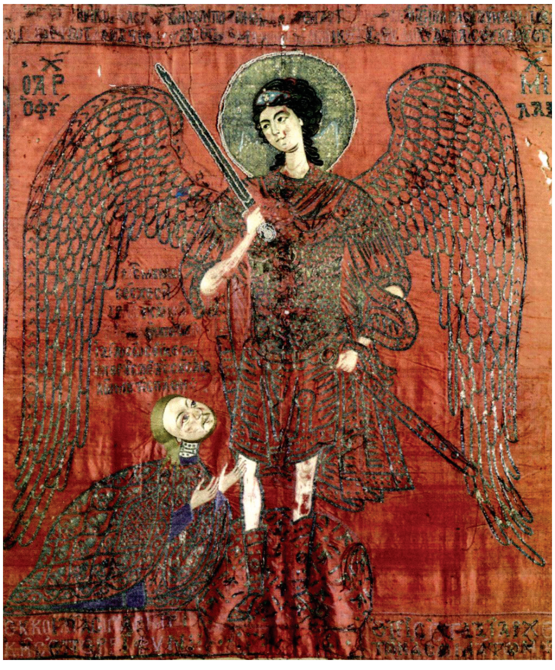
Dating from the end of the 13th century, this fresco shows St George with a round shield bearing the crescent-and-sun motif surrounded by 'planets'. (*in situ* Church of Aghios Athanasios, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

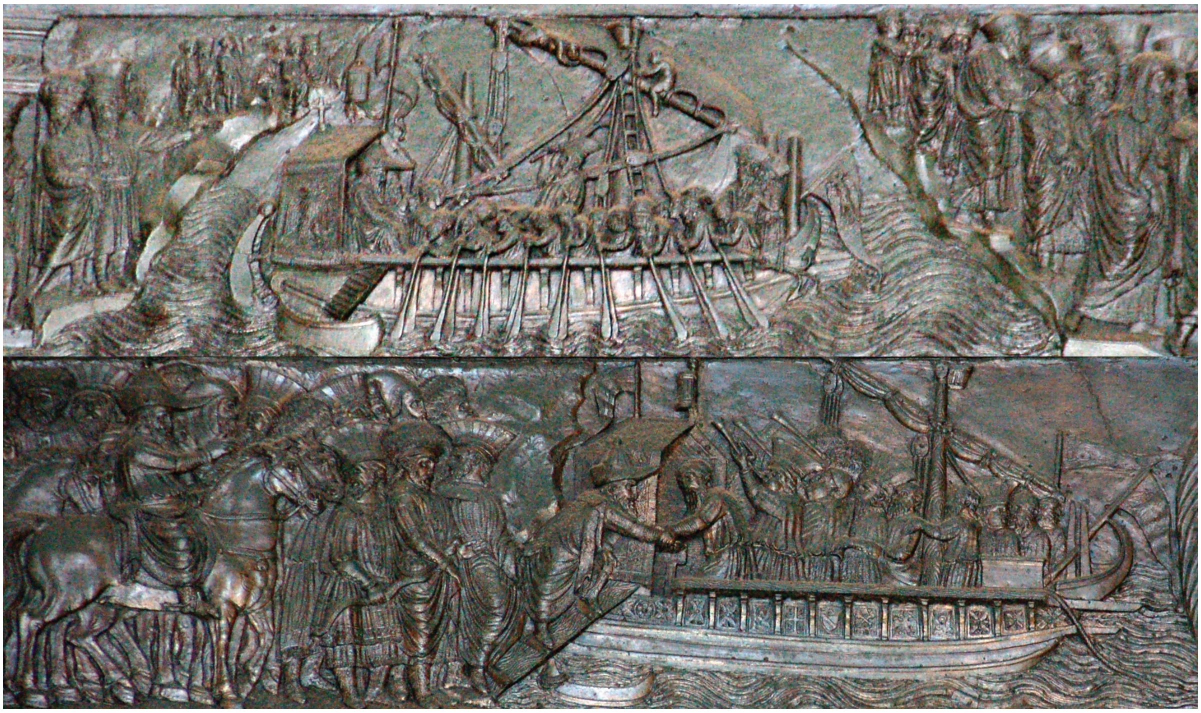
Naval flags

Since only flags could reveal the identity of a ship they were used with great care, and the flags of the Imperial navy are well recorded. The early 14th-century Pseudo-Kodinos informs us (*De Off.*, III, 17–23, p.167) that the commanders of the Imperial fleet exhibited the usual Imperial flag showing the cross, but surrounded by the *Pirekvolai* – i.e. the broken chain-links shaped like four upright letters 'B', standing for the Palaiologos motto 'Kings of kings, ruling over kings'.

A painting by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *c.*1330, now in the Uffizi Museum in Florence, depicts scenes from the life of St Nicholas. It includes two ships unloading corn in a harbour; one of them flies the flag of a golden cross on a red field with four golden balls in the corners. The second standard, a black eagle on a white field, is very similar to the Roman flag painted by Piero della Francesca in his 'Cycle of the True Cross' more than a century later. Both motifs are repeated alternating on a series of small shields that decorate the bows of the two vessels. Lorenzetti's source was surely the *Golden Legend*, a 13th-century Italian text which clearly states that the two ships were transporting goods destined for the Imperial granaries, and that the miracle took place in the native province of the saint

This naval military standard , dated to 1423, is one of the few Eastern Roman silk flags surviving today. Embroidered in gold on a purple-red ground, it depicts the Fleet commander Manuel Palaiologos kneeling before the Archangel Michael, and has a long supplicatory inscription running around the borders. Doctor Babuin is of the opinion that its small size argues against a naval use for this flag; however, the present author believes that it was used by embarked troops. (Courtesy Galleria nazionale delle Marche, Urbino; author's photo)





The Imperial galley of Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, in bronze relief panels dated to about 1448. They clearly depict the emperor's galley entering and leaving the port of Venice in 1438/39; it flies both a standard with a cross, and a banner with a double-headed eagle, the latter probably the personal emblem of the emperor. (Details from Filarete Door, *in situ* St Peter's Basilica, Rome; photos courtesy Dr Marco Lucchetti)

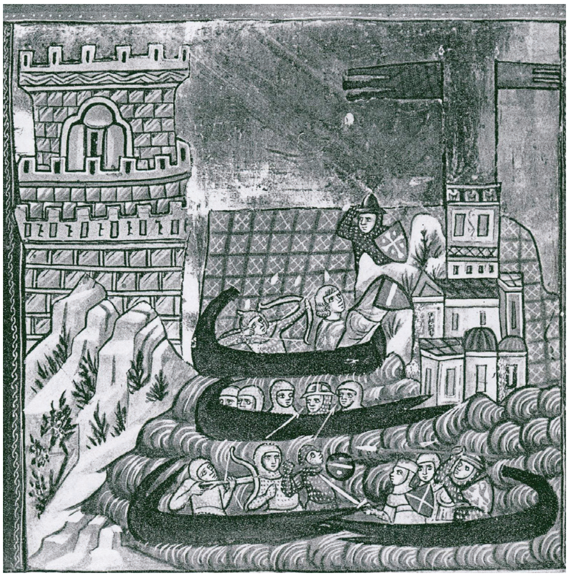
(Jacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, p.28). The painting probably represents faithfully the Roman flags flown aboard Imperial ships calling at Italian ports.

According to Pseudo-Kodinos, the *Megas Dukas* used to hoist a flag different from those of the other ships, showing an emperor on horseback. However, a contemporary lead seal of Theodora Palaiologhina, widow of the *Megas Dukas* Isaakios (died c.1310–20, and therefore roughly contemporary with Pseudo-Kodinos), shows the admiral's ship with a flag bearing the traditional cross.

The last written source for Byzantine naval flags is probably a Venetian document of 1438, stating that the three galleys supplied by Venice to the Greek Emperor John VIII, when he attended the Council of Ferrara, were allowed to hoist the Imperial flag (*Acta Alb. Ven.*, XVI, 3833, p.24). In the *Chronicon* of Pseudo-Sphrantzès (II, 14) there is a description of the *bucintoro* sent by the Doge of Venice to meet the emperor's ship; the Venetian vessel sported at the prow two flags with the Lion of Saint Mark, and between them, in compliment, another standard carrying the Imperial two-headed eagle. This is confirmed by bronze reliefs on the Filarete Door of St Peter's Basilica in Rome, executed in *c.*1448, which depict the Imperial galley of John VIII in Venice.

While the early 14th-century Western manual by Sanudo prescribes that ships should display their main standards at prow and stern and small pennons at the sides, the images of Roman ships do not always seem to comply with this. They do, for example, on the ship depicted in the Church of Our Lady at Arión; in the ships of *Vat. Slav.* 2 (folio 62v); and on the Imperial galley on the Filarete Door – but not in the *molydobullon* of Theodora Palaiologhina, widow of the *Megas Dukas* in about 1310–20, nor on some Trebizond galleys represented in *The Romance of Alexander*.

The use of images of saints on naval flags is also confirmed by the sources. One instance was the locally made insignia adopted by Cretan rebels in 1363, when an image of St Titus replaced the Venetian banner: 'All ships, large or small and of any condition, which are accustomed to show insignia… should fly as the common Cretan flag, in any part of the world, wherever they sail, the image of St Titus, special protector and lord of this island'. Another military saint recorded as a protector of seafarers, especially in Thessaloniki, was St Demetrios, and it would not be surprising if his icon or image was represented on the flags of some ships.



This scene in the *Histoire Universelle* of c.1286, supposedly depicting an Athenian naval battle, includes a crossbowman in the left foreground. During the 13th century armoured crossbowmen became a specialist marine elite, and larger ships even carried armourers to maintain their weapons. (British Museum, Add Ms 15268, folio 136v; photo courtesy Dr Andrea Babuin)

REPRESENTATIVE ACTIONS

1275: Philanthrôpènos's victory at Demetrias

In 1275 the Emperor Michael VIII made a vigorous effort to crush the Epirot ruler, the Despot John I Doukas 'the Bastard' of Thessaly, who was supported by the Latin (Frankish) lords of Greece. Since the nominal head of the Fleet, the *Megas Dukas* Michael Laskaris, was too old, the *Protostrator* Alexios Philanthrôpènos was appointed to take effective command of a force of 73 vessels to attack the Latin lords (Pachymeris, 1835, II, 325, 4–8; 1984, pp.412ff; Gregoras, 1829, I, 117; 1973, pp.123ff). However, John the Bastard's crushing victory over the Imperial army at Neopatras greatly encouraged his allies (Sanudo, *Historia*, 121; Pachymeris, 1835, II, 332, 1–4; 1984, pp.421ff), and a powerful fleet, mainly composed of Venetian ships from Crete and Euboea (Negroponte), attacked the Imperial fleet anchored in the harbour of Demetrias on the Gulf of Volos.

The sources vary over the relative strengths of the two fleets. Sanudo writes that the attackers had '12 galleys and turreted ships, and 50 other oared ships against the Emperor's fleet formed by 80 galleys'. Gregoras (1835, I, 117, 2, 18–19; 1973, p.123), who left a detailed description of the battle, records the Latin fleet as 50 Venetian galleys from Crete and more than 30 Euboean vessels, against 50 Roman ships. Whatever the exact numbers, Gregoras writes that the Latin ships, upon whose bows wooden towers had been erected, attacked so violently that many Romans were thrown into the sea or injured by the shock. However, when the battle had reached its peak and an Imperial defeat seemed probable, the emperor's brother Despot John Palaiologos arrived with Roman reinforcements. During the retreat from Neopatras he had heard rumours of the enemy fleet's approach; he gathered men to him, and in one night rode the 40 miles to Demetrias. There his men found boats to carry them out to the fleet, where they took the places of the wounded or exhausted. Encouraged, the elite *Gasmouloi* and *Tzakones* begin to rally, renewing their resistance and fighting on all day long (Gregoras, 1829, II, 120, 12–14; 1973, p.125; Pachymeris, 1835, II, 333–335; 1984, pp.431–432). In the end the Venetians and their allies were completely routed by the refreshed Imperial force; all but two of their vessels were captured, as were many noblemen including Filippo Sanudo himself. Guglielmo delle Carceri, Triarch of Negroponte, was killed, but the Triarch Gilbert of Verona escaped to Chalkis, and this last Latin-held city on Euboea was only narrowly saved. According to Sanudo, the victory of Demetrias opened the way for an immediate and energetic campaign to recapture Euboea and the Aegean archipelago for the Empire.

1275–80: Campaigns of Likarios

After the victory at Demetrias the emperor was determined to expel all the Franks and Venetians from the Aegean islands. Although appointed *Megas Dukas*, Philanthrôpènos was apparently recovering from wounds (Pachymeris, 1835, II, 337, 1–13; 1984, pp.434–435), and command of the fleet and leadership of the campaign was now entrusted to a Genoese pirate and adventurer named Licario (Hellenized to 'Likarios'). Likarios had Roman troops and also Latin mercenaries who, like Rosso Metafora and his sons, flocked to his standard (Gregoras, 1829, I, 95, 23; 1973, p.111). He first attacked Karystos, capital of the southern triarchy of Euboea, which he took after a long siege by land and sea. For this victory Michael VIII invested Likarios as the feudal lord of Euboea (two-thirds of which was as yet unconquered), and gave him in marriage a Roman noblewoman with a rich dowry. In return, Likarios and 200 of his knights swore fealty to the Palaiologos dynasty.

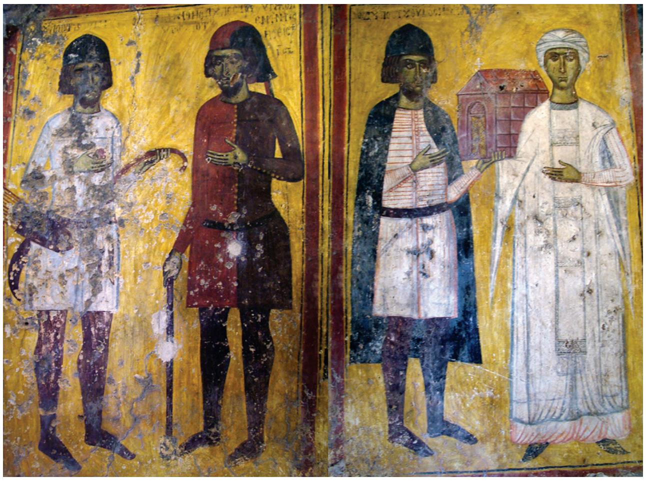
Likarios's only significant failure was at Chalkis, capital of central Euboea. In 1275 he assembled his mercenaries and landed at Oreos in the north of the island. He carried out a successful ambush outside the gates of Chalkis, capturing its triarch, the Latin lord Gilbert of Verona, and Likarios's own brother who was fighting on the other side. However, the arrival of another Latin army and supply column commanded by Jacques de la Roque, governor of Nauplia, saved the besieged capital.

Likarios took his prisoners back to Constantinople, where the Emperor elevated him to the rank of Great Constable, i.e. commander of the Latin mercenaries, and shortly afterwards, on the death of Philanthrôpènos, he became *Megas Dukas* of the Imperial Fleet. Returning to Euboea, Likarios established his headquarters at the castle of Filla, while his fleet harassed the Latins and created a reign of terror for Venetian and Frankish shipping in the area. Over the next few years Likarios made himself master of almost the whole of Euboea (except Chalkis), and attacked the other Latin-held islands of the Aegean. Command of the fleet and the service of its embarked professional troops enabled him to mount successful amphibious operations, and he conquered in turn the islands of Skopelos, Skyros, Skiathos and Amorgos, sending their Venetian overlord, Filippo Ghisi, in chains to Constantinople. After having subjugated Cerigo, Cerigotto, Keos, Seriphos, Syphnos, Astypalos, Santorini and Therasia, he attacked the powerful Venetian rulers of Lemnos, Paolo Navigajoso (r. 1260–77) and his brothers and cousins. They, and finally Paolo's widow, withstood him for three years but were finally forced to capitulate (Sanudo, 123–124, 127; Gregoras, 1835, II, 98, 15–17; 1973, pp.112–113).

Likarios continued his attacks against the Latin-held islands of the Archipelago, and carried out raids against the Duchy of Athens and Thebes. His achievements were to be relatively short-lived, however: in Euboea the Roman forts were gradually retaken by the Lombards, who recovered the entire island by 1296.

1427: Campaign of Leontarios – battle of the Echinades Islands

The year 1427 saw the last naval victory of the medieval Roman Empire, when a fleet confronted that of Carlo Tocco, Count of Kephalonia. By a combination of force and persuasion this Italian lord had established his rule over a number of islands and over parts of Epiros on the mainland of Albania and Western Greece, finally acquiring the town of Kyllene in the Peloponnese. In winter 1427 he violated a truce with the Albanians, provoking the Romans to gather forces against him and to surround the town of Clarentza by land and sea. Tocco's response was to assemble a fleet from the islands and from Epiros, sending the combined force out under the command of one of his sons, named Turnus.



Funerary portrait of Michail Mochioti and other donors from the Church of Archangelos Michail, Exo Lakonia, Crete, 1431. The costumes of these wealthy men living in a region populated by refugees from Lakonia show strong Venetian influence. The parti-coloured jacket (second from left) is a typical velvet *pourpoint*; it has many small spherical buttons down to the waist and on the rear of the sleeves, and such buttons – in silver, gilded bronze, and more rarely in gold – have been found at various Balkan sites.
Images in the *Vergilio Riccardiano* of c.1450 (e.g. folio 78r) also suggest the use in this period – by those who could afford it – of complete plate armour in the Western style, as reconstructed in Plate G1. (Author's photo)

The emperor despatched his own galleys under the command of the *Megas Dukas* Demetrios Laskaris Leontares (Leontarios), and the two fleets met off the Echinades Islands. A spirited account describes how the Imperial crews raised their banners, sang hymns, sounded trumpets and drums, and then charged against the opposing ships, crushing the outriggers of some of them. They killed a great many of the crews, at first by archery and engines hurling missiles, and then with javelins and catapult-bolts as they closed in. They captured some ships with their crews, and reduced others to such a ruinous state that they turned and fled. The flagship was nearly taken, together with its commander, since most of the troops on its deck had fallen. Many others threw their weapons aside and shouted out that they were the emperor's servants, begging for mercy. The Latin flagship would have been captured but for a serious misjudgement by the Imperial captains: thinking that it could not possibly escape, they turned away to complete the destruction of other warships, and it somehow limped away. Nevertheless, half the Tocco forces were captured, among them many from noble families including one of Carlo's nephews.

Galata

Shortly after this Imperial victory, the Genoese Republic prepared a fleet with the help of resources from the Genoese residents of Galata – or Pera – the foreign quarter that faced Constantinople across the Golden Horn. They intended to force the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos to settle in their favour disputes relating to commerce in Greece and the Aegean islands (a goal that would have compensated them for their recent loss of Caffa to the Crimean Tatars). The Senate of Genoa equipped a fleet which embarked about 10,000 men, who, arriving before the City, began siege operations. However, the disembarked Genoese troops were attacked by the garrison, defeated, and compelled to take refuge on their ships. At the same time Imperial galleys under the command of Leontarios cut off the Genoese fleet and routed it, capturing many ships. Leontarios immediately blockaded Galata with his fleet, taking the ships in its harbour and soon reducing the inhabitants to starvation. The colonists of Galata were compelled to sue for mercy, and had to refund the emperor for all the expenses of the war, including the cost of repairing the damage that their guns had done to the City.

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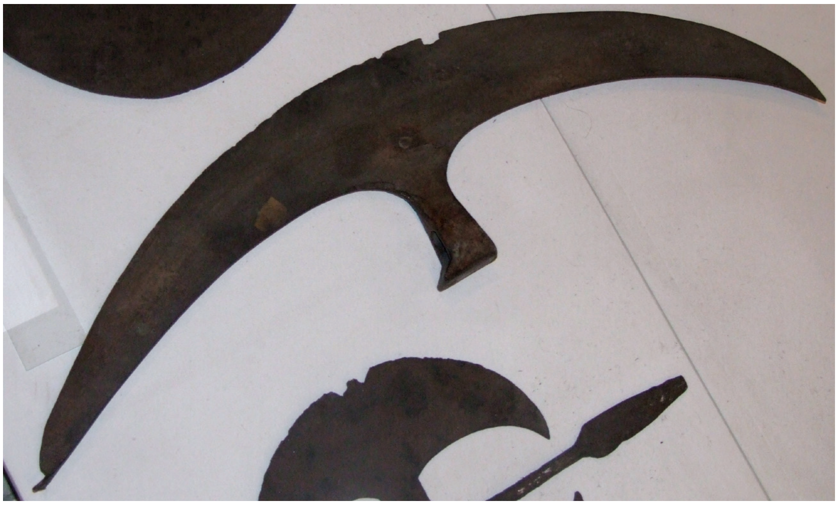
PLATE COMMENTARIES



Heads of 13th-century poleaxes; see Plate A1. (Courtesy Kazanlik Museum, Bulgaria; author's photo)

A: SECOND HALF OF 13th CENTURY

A1: *Gasmoulos*

From folio 105v of the *Histoire Universelle*, and the sources describing these seafaring light infantry as being of mixed descent. Note the fabric or leather bonnet of Western style worn loose or tied under the chin. Christian naval warriors of the period, especially in the West, tended to be clean-shaven. We have also added our reconstruction of the type of small *bourcète* belt-pouch typically used by 'Latin', and more specifically Venetian and Genoese sailors, and a Western-style *basilard* dagger. The distinctive axe that he carries for battle is based on a 13th-century example now in the museum at Kazanlik, Bulgaria.

A2: *Proselentas*

Obviously, the oarsmen wore their own clothing, sometimes with the addition of padded coifs and/or mail head protection. The sources for this man are the Boyana Church frescoes of the legend of St Nicholas, and the oarsmen in folio 136v of the British Library's Add Ms 15268, produced in Acre in about 1286. Seamen used light weapons in battle, in this case a 'glaive'- or 'bill'-style polearm with a protective leather sheath when not in use.

A3: Officer of *Tzakones*

This *archon*, wearing a richly decorated *chapel-de-fer* helmet and a scale *klibanon* body armour complete with a rigid collar, is taken from the church frescoes at Geraki. His sword scabbard and belt would be decorated with silver and gilt details. The interior of his shield probably bears the symbol of his unit and/or the heraldic device of the former Latin lord of Geraki. (Plate by Igor Dzis)

B: BATTLE OF DEMETRIAS, 1275

This scene represents the famous battle between Roman and Venetian fleets, with Roman marines – **(1, 2 & 3)** – boarding a Venetian ship. According to Gregoras, the Venetian ships were fitted with high wooden towers which made it look as if one was 'confronting a wall, not [fighting] a sea battle'. In this period Venetian military costume still showed some strong Byzantine influence alongside Norman styles. Period frescoes, mosaics and manuscript miniatures show the use by heavy marines of Byzantine-style lamellar cuirasses as worn by **(5)**, and of the *oplon* or *amphion*, i.e. a full mail hauberk usually complete with coif and mittens *(cheroptia)*, as worn here by the Venetian officer **(4)** with added greaves and leather forearm protection. Helmets are shown in 'Phrygian' shape **(4)** or as simple bowls with nasal bars, and are often coloured. Others, shaped like Western *chapels-de-fer* **(1)** were called in Greek *kranoi* or *kukla*. The sources also show *linothorakes* similar to Western European 'soft armours' or surcoats **(2)**, and leg protection *(sidera gonatia)* like Western ringmail *chausses* **(1)**. As well as ringmail, scale armour **(3)**, and coats-of-plates **(1)**, sources also seem to show so-called 'banded mail' **(2)**. (Plate by Peter Dennis)

C: LEMNOS, 1276

C1: Likarios as *Megas Konostaulos*

During his reconquest of the Aegean islands in 1275–80 following the victory at Demetrias, some authors suggest that Licario/Likarios already held this rank of commander of the Imperial mercenaries. He wears a high red-and-gold *skaranikon*; the red silk upper part of this cylindrical headgear is adorned with a net of golden thread, and the frontal is made of gilded glass and bears a portrait of a standing emperor. The main garment is a silk *kabbadion* in green, heavily interwoven with gold Chinese-style patterns.

C2: *Archon* of *Gasmouloi*

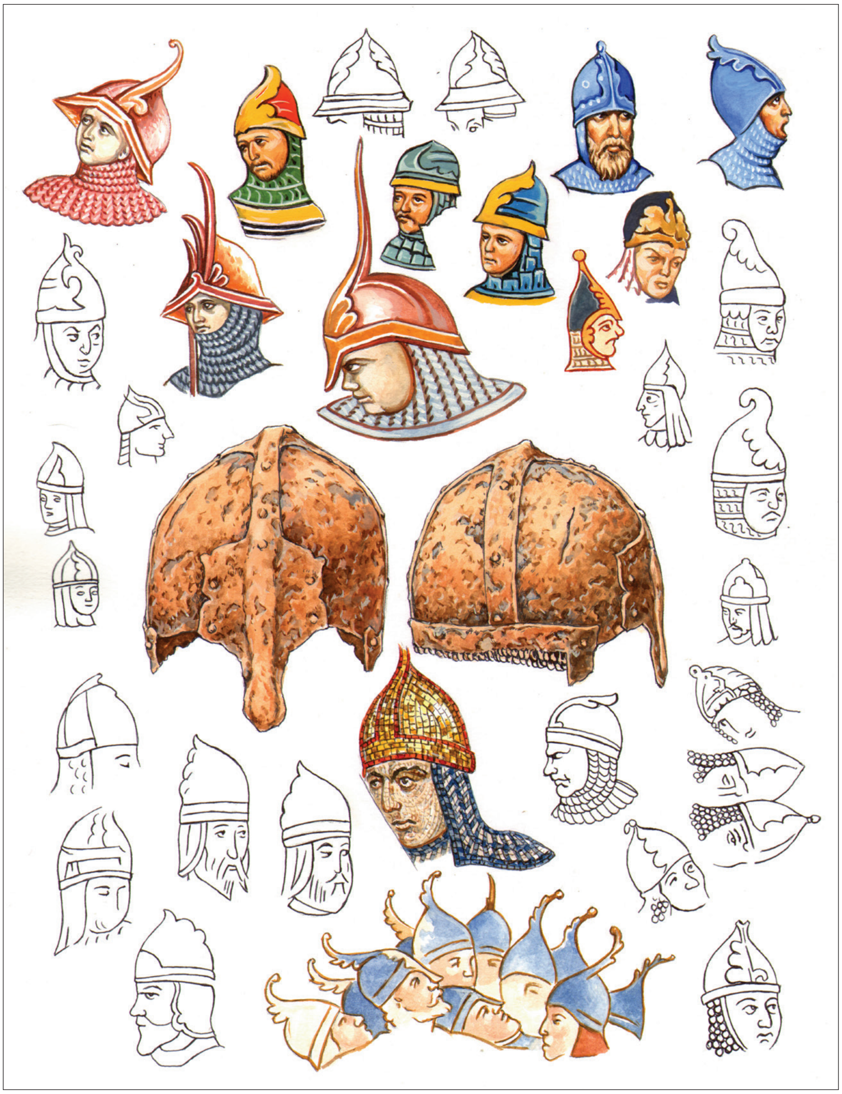
The presence of bonnets on the heads of warriors in the iconography representing Roman soldiers of these centuries may be an identification of naval troops, or at least of Western mercenaries. If this is true, the magnificent details of military costume in the frescoes of the Church of the Panaghia Chrisafitissa, in Chrisafa, Lakonia, dated to 1289–90, are particularly important. An officer in the 'Betrayal of Christ' scene wears a white bonnet in Western style.

C3: Venetian officer in service of Paolo Navigajoso

He displays equipment of the best quality in the Levant: a *chapel-de-fer* with a separate mail coif; an armour of bone scales in Balkan style, worn over a complete sleeved ringmail shirt over a leather backing; and quilted *cuisses* with domed hardened-leather *poleyns*.

C4: Latin mercenary

The sources (e.g. Sanudo, p.125) record that the troops assembled by Likarios were largely Latin mercenaries, especially Catalans, and even former soldiers of King Manfredi



Selection of helmets copied from manuscript miniatures, 13th–14th centuries. (Centre) Eastern Roman helmet found in the Kuban – compare with Plate D2. (Private collection; drawings by Igor Dzis, ex-Gorelik)

of Sicily, who had been defeated and killed by Charles d'Anjou's army at the battle of Benevente in 1266. This man's 'soft armour' is shaped like an under-armour *gambeson*, but made of more layers of linen and leather since it had to provide his primary protection. (Plate by Igor Dzis)

D: THE MOREA GARRISON, 13th–14th CENTURIES

D1: Officer, heavy cavalry *Tzakones*

Reconstructed, like much else in this plate, from the frescoes at Geraki, this officer shows very expensive equipment; his scale-armour *klibanon* is gilded. The locally made *kranos* (*chapel-de-fer*) iron helmet is of two-part construction, with vertical crossed bands riveted to the bowl and probably a further horizontal band around it. Riveted to the front is a bronze brow reinforcement shaped like a *fleur-de-lys*, and on the top a reinforcing finial typical of Byzantine helmets of the period.

D2: *Tzangratoros*

This crossbowman's long ringmail hauberk shows typical Frankish influence, as does the use of the dreaded crossbow or *tzangra*. However, his helmet represents an evolution of the Roman tradition of 'ridge helmets', with a central band uniting the two parts of the skull, and a frontal plate which was both decorative and provided reinforcement. Though often represented in the iconography, such helmets were until recently considered a mere artistic convention; but they have been confirmed by two specimens from the Kuban and Crimea, a region with close trade links with Trebizond and Byzantium.

D3: *Archon* of *Tzakones*

This garrison commander in full armour shows the blazon of the *Tzakones* on his triangular shield. He is partially armed according to the prescriptions of Theodore Palaiologos, except that the *chapel-de-fer* is replaced by a conical *spangenhelm*. In Western or Roman terms respectively, the body armour worn under his cuirass consists of a *pourpoint* or *epilorikion*, and a *gorgere* or *peritrachelion*.

D4: Armoured *stratiotes*

This warrior is protected by a typically Roman *zoupa* made of felt and leather, and by a helmet of Mongol origin bearing a Chinese inscription. The shafted weapon was specifically intended for maritime combat. (Plate by Igor Dzis)

E: CIVIL WAR IN CONSTANTINOPLE, 1341

E1: *Megas Dukas* Alexios Apokaukos

Alexios is reconstructed following his portrait and the description by Pseudo-Kodinos. The front of his *skaranikon* headgear bears the image of a standing emperor, and the back an image of an enthroned emperor. The court dress, which could also be worn on campaign, is a silk *(vlátion) kabbadion* of his personal choice; a sort of kaftan made of heavy and costly material, with overall decoration of animal, floral or geometrical motifs enclosed in medallions, geometric grids, or complex interlacing foliate patterns.

E2: *Flamoularios* with standard of the *Megas Dukas*

This guardsman bears the Fleet commander-in-chief's standard as described by Pseudo-Kodinos; the image of a mounted emperor between saints was perhaps similar to that on the famous silk standard preserved in Bamberg. Note that he wears a *kapasion* cap of distinctive 'bagged' appearance. His outer *kazakan* jacket of silk and leather lined with flat-ringed mail is worn over a leather jerkin with a high, divided collar, over an arming doublet fringed with leather *pteryges.*

E3: Guardsman of *Tzakones*

Pseudo-Kodinos leaves us a vivid description of the *Tzakones* guardsmen. They too wore the *kapasion* cap (absent here), and over their armour a blue *epanoklibanon* ornamented with two facing lions. Here it covers a cuirass made, like the attached upper arm guards, of *cuir bouilli;* beneath this a padded linen and felt garment is worn over his red tunic.

E4: Jewish merchant of Constantinople

This figure is copied from a mosaic in the former Chora church in Istanbul, today the Kariye Camii Museum. He carries a bag of gold coins, which he wishes to present to E1.
(Plate by Peter Dennis)

F: TREBIZOND EMPIRE, 1355

All these figures are reconstructed after the famous 14th-century '*Romance of Alexander*' codex now in the library of the Hellenic Institute of St George of Greece, Venice.

F1: Emperor Alexios III Komnenos

The young emperor is dressed for war in a conventional Roman armour of gilded scales as was typical for an emperor. The round, red-lacquered breastplate is clearly an import from his Turkish enemies.

F2: Princess Irene

The costume of the princesses of Trebizond was heavily influenced by the fashions of the neighbouring Kingdom of Georgia. The emperor's mother wears a crown similar to his.

F3: Latin *archon*

This officer of the Imperial fleet of Trebizond is dressed in a very decorative costume, reflecting the last splendours of the Eastern Roman states.

F4: Laz guardsman

This archer is one of the Lazes from the Pontic region who formed the main manpower of the Trebizond forces. His flowing topcoat, heavily ornamented at the hem, is worn over a short tunic, close-fitting trousers and boots. Note his composite bow and his typical Caucasian cap. (Plate by Peter Dennis)

G: BATTLE OF THE ECHINADES ISLANDS, 1427

G1: *Megas Dukas* Demetrios Laskaris Leontarios

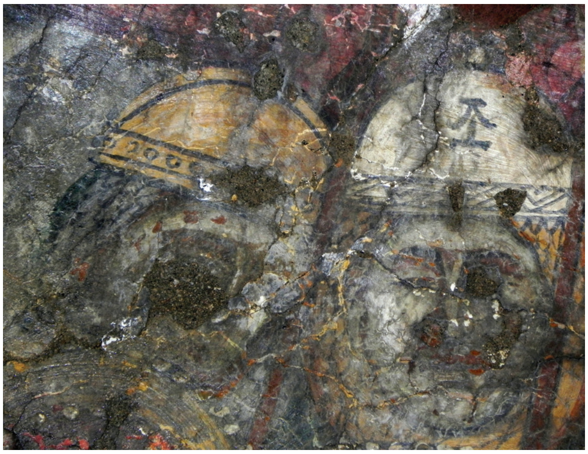
The miniatures in the *Vergilio Riccardiano* manuscript suggest that by the first half of the 15th century full 'white' plate armours in Western style were used by Roman senior commanders and *archontes*. His sword is of Venetian typology.

G2: Byzantine 'Greek Fire' specialist

This man's *chapel-de-fer* is of German origin, and his body protection is mainly of leather. We have no direct evidence for the methods of projecting Greek Fire at this date; we reconstruct the late *cheirosiphon*, for close-quarter engagements, after a contemporary Mameluk example visible in original manuscripts in the former Imperial library of Istanbul.

G3: *Drongarios* standard-bearer of the Imperial Fleet

The noble *archon* who bears the naval battle flag of St Michael – and the captive kneeling at his feet – wear differing armours described in the sources for Romans and Latins alike; both are based on Western styles, but with local modifications. In this case the Byzantine elements are most noticeable: a basic design resembling in construction a 14th-century coat-of-plates, such as those from the Visby graves, is married with shoulder caps, hanging leather defences at upper arms and abdomen, and one-piece metal greaves. Byzantine helmets were sometimes worn together with a felt cap (*skoúfion*), and there was also use of bascinets and sallets (*celate*) among other Western types.



Detail of helmets from an early 14th-century fresco of the guards sleeping at the Holy Sepulchre; the right-hand example bears a Chinese inscription, so is almost certainly of Mongol origin – see Plate D4. (*in situ* Church of St John Chrisostomos, Geraki, Lakonia; author's photo)

G4: Captured Kephalonian officer

A relevant period sculpture shows a short, padded jerkin laced at the chest (here we have chosen the blue and white colours of the Tocco family), worn over a long-sleeved ringmail shirt to mid-thigh, and full 15th-century Western leg armour. The source depicts a heavy chain with floral decoration worn diagonally over the armour, with a rose-shaped pendant at centre front. (Plate by Peter Dennis)

H: MILITARY TRAINING; MONEMVASIA, 1429

H1: *Toxotes* archer

H2: Cavalry *stratiotes*

H3: Infantry *stratiotes*

This scene represents *Monemvasiotai Tzakones* training for war on horseback and foot. The prototypes for their reconstruction are the warriors painted in the Faneromeni Monastery, Kato Mani. According to Sphrantzès: '... on land and sea they are always very able and virtuous, good seafarers and sailors; having many ships, they are excellent ship-owners and captains, not only with their own ships, but also in the Imperial Fleet where many of them are commanders. At the same time on the dry land they are highly renowned cavalrymen and warriors skilled in javelin throwing, but also tenacious and brave infantrymen. Indeed their commanders were considered keen and wise and were held in great esteem... From ancient times until today they have preserved their faith and their love of God and the Roman authorities.' (Plate by Peter Dennis)

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